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WIZARD

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ON THE COVERS

The **Wolverine/Jean Grey** cover (left) was drawn by Frank Cho and colored by Hi-Fi Design. Turn to **page 66** for our interview with controversial Marvel head Bill Jemas as he speaks on the X-Men and whatever else crosses his mind. The **Batman/Joker** cover (middle) was done by Jim Lee and Scott Williams, colored by Alex Sinclair. Go behind the DC curtain and read details of Lee and Jeph Loeb jumping on Batman on **page 50**. The **photo collage** cover featuring some of today's hottest properties points toward our Comics We Wanna See feature on **page 56**. What do you think are the chances?

Cover and this page: Osbournes: MTV; Eminem and Harry Potter: Everett Collection; Lord of the Rings: New Line; Spears: Sipa Star/Paul Fenton; Matrix: Warner Bros.; Birds of Prey: Courtesy DPA

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FROM THE TOP

CONTEST HEAVEN

Back in *Wizard* #127, we ran a contest sponsored by our friends at CrossGen Comics, who promised to award a $20,000 prize to the one fan who could correctly answer 20 trivia questions about the CrossGen Universe. Well, that lucky fella turned out to be Donald J. Smith of San Jose, Calif., who received his check from CrossGen CEO and Publisher Mark Alessi during this year's San Diego Comi-Con (see photo above). Don was the only entrant who got all 20 questions right. Congratulations, Don!

Speaking of CrossGen, we've got a cool six-page preview of their newest upcoming series, *Chimera*, on **page 42**. And speaking of previews, we've also got a sneak peek at Top Cow's relaunch of *The Darkness* on **page 36**, plus a mammoth comics TV and movie preview on **page 90**!

Come behind the scenes with us as we analyze the inner workings of one of the biggest projects of the year: Jeph Loeb and Jim Lee on *Batman* (**page 50**). Check out what properties we'd like to see made into comics on **page 56**, and see if you agree with us on our grading of the different books in the Spider-Man Universe (**page 74**). And of course, with Halloween fast approaching, it just wouldn't feel complete without a look at this year's winners of our annual costume contest (**page 82**).

For you *HeroClix* players, don't forget to order the "Our Worlds at War" Superman on **page 64**, the most powerful figure ever! Be the first to own one!

Have a safe Halloween everyone! See you in a month!

Sincerely,

Gareb Shamus

BY THE NUMBERS

Statistics compiled when we put this bad boy together

Number of pages of the first draft of the TV and Movie Preview	22
Number of pages it had to be trimmed to	10
Number of people charged with painting the entire *Wizard* office	1
Number of days it took him to finish the job	14
Number of *Wizard* staffers who got a buzz from the paint fumes	2
Number, in pounds, of hot dogs and hamburgers consumed at the *Wizard* company picnic	185
Number of home runs belted by Designer Kenny Martinez at said picnic	4*
Number of entries for this year's Halloween Costume Contest	547
Number of entries we couldn't print because of questionable content	4
Number of questions submitted by fans for the Bill Jemas Q&A	398
Number of questions we couldn't ask him because of questionable content	12
Number of chairs Managing Editor Mel Caylo has broken in four years at *Wizard*	3
Number shy of the record at *Wizard*	4

*The picnic coincided with Kenny's last day at *Wizard*. Good luck Kenny!

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JESSICA ALBA AS FATHOM?... 'MATRIX' MAN'S NEW PLANS... ...AND ALEX ROSS' PAYCHECK!

Hey! Our readers are all smart and stuff! Don't believe me? Read the first two letters, Poindexter....

Dear Jim,

I wanted to write in and applaud Jeremy Plants and his *Wizard* #130 letter chronicling his research paper and first foray into comic book scholarship. I'm writing to inform the populace that the study of comics is alive and well—if relatively unknown—in academia.

Several college libraries, most notably Michigan State University, have collections of both comics and comic-related scholarship, and more higher education universities are adding classes on the form yearly. In particular, the University of Mississippi Press produces a number of comic-related texts.

As someone who has enjoyed analyzing comics since my undergrad days, I would suggest eager minds like Jeremy who are interested in taking comics further to hop online and learn about the Comic Scholars List and associated conferences to which they can submit papers and learn from other lecturers.

A. David Lewis
Georgetown University
Washington, DC

For those of you interested in the Comic Scholars List, please memorize this funky URL, then eat this page:
http://www.sp.uconn.edu/~epk93002/comixschl/

Just watch out for Brainiac, okay?

Hello, Jim,

Not too long ago, I took a trip down to a local Books-a-Million store to look for the book that profoundly affected the comic industry to those decades ago—*Seduction of the Innocent* by Fredric Wertham. However, the bulging eyes and stumbling speech from the clerk behind the counter when I asked about the book let me know that my quest to get this tome would not bode well. The only copy they could get for me would be a little over $1,100.

Now, I'm not exactly independently wealthy. While Amazon.com has a used copy listed for a mere $795, no other place I've tried has a copy available at all. Do you know where an affordable copy can be found?

Joe Crawford
Johnson City, TN

Heh. No lie: I'm such a horrible geek that when I was a high school senior, I did a full-blown, big-ass, 20-page research paper on the history of comic book censorship. I only got a B+ 'cause I didn't have a copy of *Seduction of the Innocent* to reference as a primary source. Gee, all it woulda cost me is $795. May my Sociology teacher obtain a painful fungus in a nether region.

Anyhoo, John Petty, auction director at mega-auction house Heritage Comics, tells us, "The market is always strong for these books, although they do tend to get pretty pricey. Most of the copies I've seen are without dust jacket, and can command anywhere from $150 up to about $800. Add a dust jacket to that, and the prices go even higher."

Higher, indeed. *Seduction of the Innocent* went through

BUNNY AWARD

James,

My brother says he has a Giant-Size Man-Thing, but when I ask to see it, he just laughs. He told me you would explain the joke.

Seth Deitchman
Queens, NY

Certainly. In 1974, Marvel Comics supplemented its regular books by adding quarterly "Giant-Size" issues. In addition to 12 monthly *Avengers* at 25 cents each, they'd also publish four *Giant-Size Avengers* at 50 cents. *Giant-Size Man-Thing* ran for five issues in 1974 and '75 as the companion to the regular *Man-Thing* series. *Giant-Size Man-Thing* #4 and #5 are of particular note, as they contain early Howard the Duck appearances.

There was a joke in there somewhere?

four printings, and first printings with the bibliography intact—that bibliography, achingly important to high schoolers writing research papers, was pulled from later printings—can go for up to $2,500.

Where to get one? That's even tougher. The book has been out of print for 40+ years, and most collectors ain't sellin'. "We haven't had a single one for auction yet," Petty says.

Dear Magic Words,

I think Marvel continuity is heading for its own "Crisis"! The Marvel Universe is becoming a multiverse indeed. Here's the Marvel Universes I've catalogued:

"Earth-1," the Marvel Universe
"Earth-2," the MC-2 Universe
"Earth-3," the Evil Marvel Universe seen in *A-Next* #10-#11
"Earth-4," the New Universe
"Earth-C," the Spider-Ham Universe
"Earth-S," the Squadron Supreme's homeworld
"Earth-Sigma," the Heroes Reborn Universe
"Earth-Zero," the Ultimate Marvel Universe
"Earth-MAX,' the MAX Universe
"Earth-Razorline," home of Ectokid and others
"Earth-2099," the Marvel 2099 Universe
"Earth-1,000,000," the Guardians of the Galaxy Universe
"Earth-X," of *Earth X*, *Universe X* and *Paradise X*
"Earth-Sentinel," the X-Men "Days of Future Past" Universe

And let's not forget *Transformers* and *G.I. Joe* during their Marvel years.

This is becoming a danger for Marvel Comics. Any chance Marvel might do a Universe-cleansing *Crisis on Infinite Earths*-type storyline to sort this all out?

Adam Bednarczyk
dawid@iprimus.com.au

Hey, don't stop there! Obnoxio the Clown met the X-Men once, which must constitute a separate universe, and Dr. Doom met Stan Lee and Jack Kirby waaaaay back in *Fantastic Four* (vol.1) #10. Hell, KISS met Howard the Duck and the X-Men, and come to think of it, Spider-Man met Billy the Marlin in a Florida Marlins promotional comic once.

Okay, now let's stop the madness.

"Adam, you're tying yourself into knots," says Marvel Information Czar Bill Rosemann. "It's all very simple: There are really only two Marvel universes: the good ol' Marvel Universe (which has flowed since *FF* (vol.1) #1 and includes MAX series such as *Alias*) and the Ultimate Universe (which began with *Ultimate Spider-Man* #1). Everything else is simply possible futures, and/or *What If?*-type speculative stories, which are not in any way written in stone (such as your 2099, Earth X, Spider-Ham, 'Days of Future Past,' and so on). My bottom-line advice is to not worry about where each story fits into some chart, and instead just enjoy what you read!"

Fair enuff. Now gimme an *A-Next* to enjoy. That was really a cool book.

Dear Jim, *Wizard*, et al.,

You guys do an excellent job on your Top 10 covers, costumes, etc. articles. So how about a Top 10 cover logo designs? I have narrowed my list down to the top five.

5) *Kurt Busiek's Astro City*. This logo lets the reader know that he or she is entering a new universe and a new order in the traditional superhero world. Plus, the atom in the "O" is a neat feature.

4) *The Incredible Hulk*. This logo exudes the power and strength of the title character, as well as showing us that he is an immovable object.

3) *The Avengers*. The logo, like the team, is strong, authoritative and powerful. The arrow in the "A" is also a great added bonus.

2) *Uncanny X-Men*. This now-classic logo is extremely recognizable and versatile. You can put any character's name in that type of lettering, and you know that the X-Men are involved.

1) *Superman*. This is an icon that has lasted for over 60 years and still is as recognizable and relevant as ever. You see this on the cover of a book, and it is like the USDA stamp of approval—you know that you are getting the best quality comic book hero.

Let me know what you would put on the list.

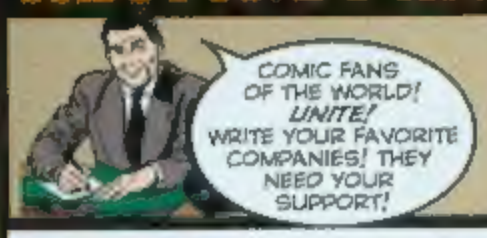
Tom Lquadrille
lquadrille@aol.com

I rather like your choices, *Avengers* in particular. The arrow and the slant of the letters give that logo a feeling like it's in motion.

And a little-known fact: DC Comics actually has a trademark on "telescoping lettering" like that seen in the *Superman* logo. Really! If ya try to sell anything from peanut butter to Buicks using *Superman*-esque letters, one of DC's lawyers may slap a cease-and-desist order on ya in a single bound.

And speaking of Supes...

HEY! IT'S PEN PALS...



Like a title? Hate a character? Just have something to say? Then write your favorite comic company and let 'em know what you're thinking. Send your thoughts to the following addresses, but be sure to send your letters in care of a particular book or editor. Power to the people!

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Magic Words,

What in the name of Martha Kent is a "Baldy Award"? Way back in *Superman: The Man of Steel* #107, a letter of mine was printed in regards to a question I answered on John Henry. They said I'd get a Baldy. I have written DC Comics three times since then, asking what they meant. No response, no Baldy.

Honestly, I haven't read a Superman comic since. Can you guys help bring my Super-spirit back?

Travis B. Christian
Bakersfield, CA

Don't be losin' your hair (Ha!) over this one. Super-Editor Eddie Berganza has you covered.

"The Baldy is an *actual* prize—not a 'No-Prize'—that then-Super-editor Mike Carlin created in 1991," Berganza says. "I don't want to say what it is, but I actually *added* to it during the Lex Luthor presidential campaign. Because of some mail incidents we were suffering from a while back, we may have missed you. Drop me a line, and we will rectify that immediately. We want to restore that Super-spirit in everyone!"

Fast Eddie can be reached at: DC Comics, 1700 Broadway, New York, NY 10016.

Dear *Wizard*,

Is Steve Skroce done with his work on the "Matrix" films? Is he planning on making a comeback in comics? His art on *Gambit* and his storytelling on *Wolverine* were excellent, and I'm sure ANY book he does in the (hopefully) near future will be just as great.

Eric Callen
Kittanning, PA

Steve Skroce is indeed done with the "Matrix" flicks, having put in 15 months of work on the two sequels. As to comics?

"I'm working on my future comic as we speak," Skroce says. "My plan is to draw it all, and then bring it to a publisher." Skroce says he's working on the book with "another pro who shall remain nameless," and hopes to have the secretive book out by 2003.

Wizard,

No question about it. "Fathom" would be a killer movie! I hear "Titanic" and "Abyss" director James Cameron may be working on it. That's great, 'cuz while I'm on that subject...

Cameron and Jessica Alba already make a great team on TV's "Dark Angel." Might *Fathom* creator Michael Turner consider Alba as lead character Aspen Matthews?

Gary Brantner
Riverside, UT

Sure he might. In fact, he has.

"Her name came up in a meeting with one of the producers," Turner reveals. "They asked me what nationality Aspen was and I said, 'Pacific Ocean.' Her nationality should be kinda nondescript."

Turner mentioned Alba as a possibility. "*She*'s strik-

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QUICK HITS

THE READERS STRIKE BACK!

"Saw your 'Conventions 101' in *Wizard* #131. Remember: The Magic Rule at every con is 6-2-1. Six hours of sleep a day, two solid meals, one bath or shower."

—Major Chris Hanssen, U.S.S. Triton NCC-71819

"I liked the '100 Paperbacks' list in *Wizard* #131, but where was *The Crow*? This book is a modern gothic masterpiece!

—Bob Davalina, Ann Arbor, MI

"I've been reading about all these '80s comic book revamps such as Thundercats, G.I. Joe, Transformers, etc. So why don't they bring back Mr. T?"

—Kellen Ramsey, kdawg69911@aol.com

"I've really had enough of all these '80s comic revivals. *Thundercats*? Please."

—Thomas Englebert, Sun Valley, CA

"Marvel Comics have all but dropped the Bullpen Bulletins and letters pages from their comics. Heads up, Bill Jemas and Joe Quesada! Bring those back!"

—Laurence Smith, Houston, TX

"Good to see that Sirius Entertainment still takes submissions from fans ['Magic Words,' *Wizard* #132]. More than anything, it's nice to see that someone still *cares* about fans."

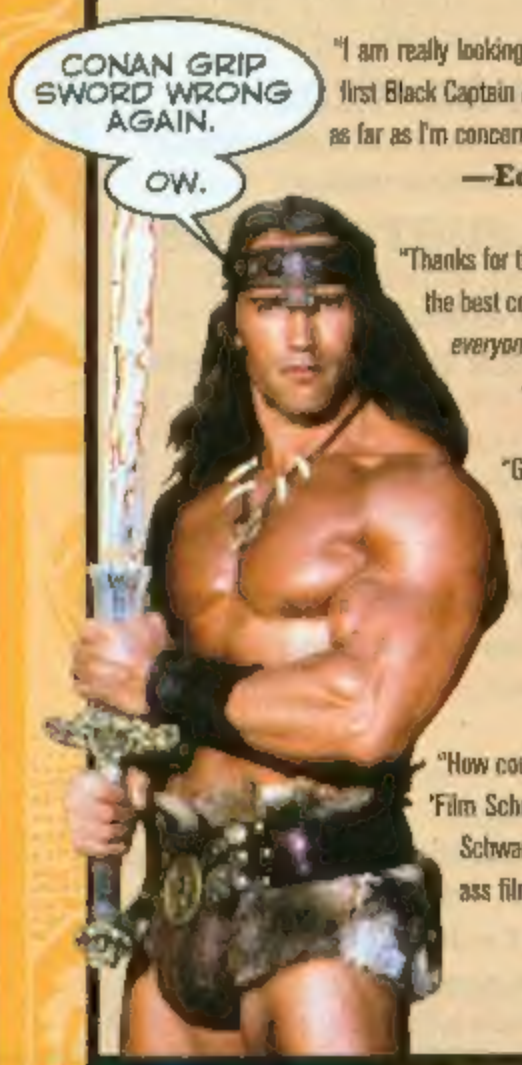
—Logan Peterson, Parumph, NV

"The *Batman* #608 preview [*Wizard* #132] looks great—about as action-packed as a comic can get!"

—Tanner Adair, Nitro, WV

"I've been hearing about *Swamp Thing* #88, the controversial 'Swamp Thing meets Christ' story [*Wizard* #132] for years. Here's a simple plea for DC Comics: Just publish it already."

—Matthew Hiller, Detroit, MI



"I am really looking forward to Marvel's *Truth* series about the first Black Captain America. This series can't come fast enough, as far as I'm concerned."

—Eddie Charles, New York, NY

"Thanks for the article on *HeroClix* [*Wizard* #132]! This is the best comic-based game since, well, anything! I wish *everyone* played!"

—Harold Selvy, Dayton, OH

"Geeeez, Wolverine looks creepy on the cover of *Wizard* #132. I guess that means Joe Jusko is a good artist."

—Bali Kalamaphur, Vancouver, Brtish Columbia

"How could you omit 'Conan the Barbarian' from your 'Film School' list [*Wizard* #132]? It launched Arnold Schwarzenegger's career, and was a top-notch, kick-ass film."

—Robert Chappell Jr., Mountain City, TN

ing, but she doesn't strike you with any specific nationality," Turner says. "They're happy to consider her, 'cause they're already working with her."

As to if Alba gets the role? Hang loose. Time will tell.

Dear *Wizard*,

I just recently found out about the comic *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac* by Jhonen Vasquez, and I was wondering if there was any way to order these books, seeing as I don't have an actual comic store here and no credit card to order online. Can you help me?

And are there any cons that are going to happen in New Mexico or Texas? Seeing as I'm not in a big city, and have no way to get to Chicago, San Diego or Orlando, I was wondering if there'd be one I could actually go to.

Marley Armstrong
fathom_girl00@hotmail.com

In all things comic-ordery, I turn to Bud Plant Comic Art. Credit cards and online access are very helpful, but Bud has been known to take checks and cold, hard American cash as well. You can write for a catalog (which includes *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac*) at: Bud Plant Comic Art, P.O. Box 1689, Grass Valley, CA 95945.

As to shows in your neck-of-the-woods, check out "Shows and Cons," which runs every issue right here in the pages of *Wizard*.

Hey J!

How many African-American writers, pencilers and/or inkers are there in comicbookdom right now? I'm a 32-year-old AA (I'm not talkin' about Alcoholics Anonymous, either) married mother, and I love comics and your mag, but I have always felt that there is a lack of people of color in comics. I'd love to see something spotlighting some of these creators.

Margo Adams
St. Louis, MO

How many? More than you might figure. The roll call includes: Writer Christopher Priest (*Black Panther*), artists Jason Pearson (*Body Bags*), ChrisCross (*Captain Marvel*), Jamal Igle (*Wolverine/Iron Fist*), Brian Stelfreeze (cover artist extraordinaire), Keron Grant (*Iron Man*), M.D. Bright (*Marville*), Mark Morales (inker to half the comic world), Dexter Vines (inker to the other half), Denys Cowan (*Power Man and Iron Fist*), Dwayne Turner (*Butcher Knight*), Darryl Banks (*Green Lantern*), Don Hillsman (*Scion* inker), Louis Small Jr. (who is both small *and* a junior—what are the odds?), Damion Scott (*Batgirl*) and Walter McDaniel (*Stark Raven*). In addition, hyper-talented writer/artist Kyle Baker (*King David*) is also AA, to use your nomenclature, and the much-beloved Steven Hughes of Chaos! Comics, who passed away in 2000, was African-American.

One of the more interesting cats who fits this group is Canadian-African-American Ken Lashley, who runs Draxhall Jump Studio in Toronto. They've got their fingers in everything from comics to animation to action figure designs...and Ken also used to play in the Canadian Football League. Truly, a renaissance man.

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LETTER ART

The mega-talented creator of this month's best envelope takes home a *Star Wars: Underworld* trade paperback, courtesy of Dark Horse Comics! Those guys at Dark Horse are so cool for donating their stuff, we owe them bigger than Chewbacca owes Hartz for its patented flea powders and collars! Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address and a list of characters depicted on the back of the envelope.

ENVELOPE OF THE MONTH.....THE PRIZE

MANDALORIAN WARRIOR, Shaun Stroup, Chula Vista, CA

EVIL ERNIE, Nick Crouch, Glendale, AZ

ROGUE, Cody Pierce, Belton, TX

BATMAN VS. WOLVERINE, Robert M. Galtan, San Antonio, TX

Dear Mr. McLauchlin,

Will Howard the Duck have an ongoing series under the Marvel MAX imprint! Because the mini-series is great!

And has Mike Allred ended *The Atomics!*

Blake Sims
superman_blake@yahoo.com

That Duck is cooked. "While *Howard the Duck* did indeed kick tail feathers, there are no current plans for an ongoing series," Marvel Information Czar Bill Rosemann informs us.

The answer is largely the same for *The Atomics*. Writer/artist Mike Allred conceived it as 15 issues, finite and complete, and the fancy limited-edition collection that hit in July puts the cherry on that sundae.

Now *here's* an idea: *Howard the Duck* by Mike Allred! Hey, I could see it....

Dear *Wizard*,

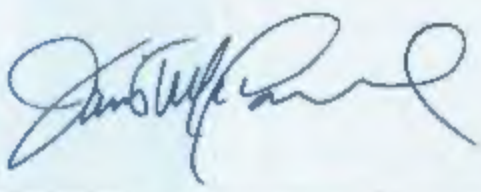
How much money does artist Alex Ross make in a year?

Gary See
Honolulu, HI

More than minimum wage, less than Celine Dion. Let's put it this way: I'd throw away my money just to count his.

That be that. Join us next month for more hijinks, tomfoolery and assorted rowdy behaviors. Oh, wait—the kitchen's out of hijinks. Well, we'll have the rest of it. Until then, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin



You can take the boy out of Minnesota, but you can't take the Minnesota Court Convictions report out of Jim McLauchlin's permanent record.

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TERRIFIC TEAM-UPS TOP '03

JLA/Avengers crossover highlights next year's major releases

TEAM SUPREME The JLA and Avengers are set to square off in 2003's most-anticipated showdown. The only person looking forward to the crossover more than fans could be artist George Pérez.

In 2003, the JLA and the Avengers won't be the only powerhouses teaming up.

As a matter of fact, the most exciting team-ups won't even be occurring on the comic book page. The hottest trend of next year appears to be the teaming of big-name creators on super high-profile projects.

From *Sandman* creator Neil Gaiman's top-secret Marvel project with *Origin* penciler Andy Kubert, to writer Kurt Busiek and penciler George Pérez's long-awaited *JLA/Avengers* mini-series, to fan-favorite artist Mike Turner's first new series since battling back from cancer, 2003 is shaping up as a year that will shock, amaze and have fans flocking to comic book shops.

And those projects are just the beginning. Here's a full rundown of 2003's most highly anticipated books.

JLA/AVENGERS

It's been over 20 years in the making, but artist George Pérez and writer Kurt Busiek say *JLA/Avengers* won't disappoint fans.

The four-issue mini-series, slated for summer 2003, will see Marvel's top team and DC's powerhouse group finally face off in what Pérez calls his dream job.

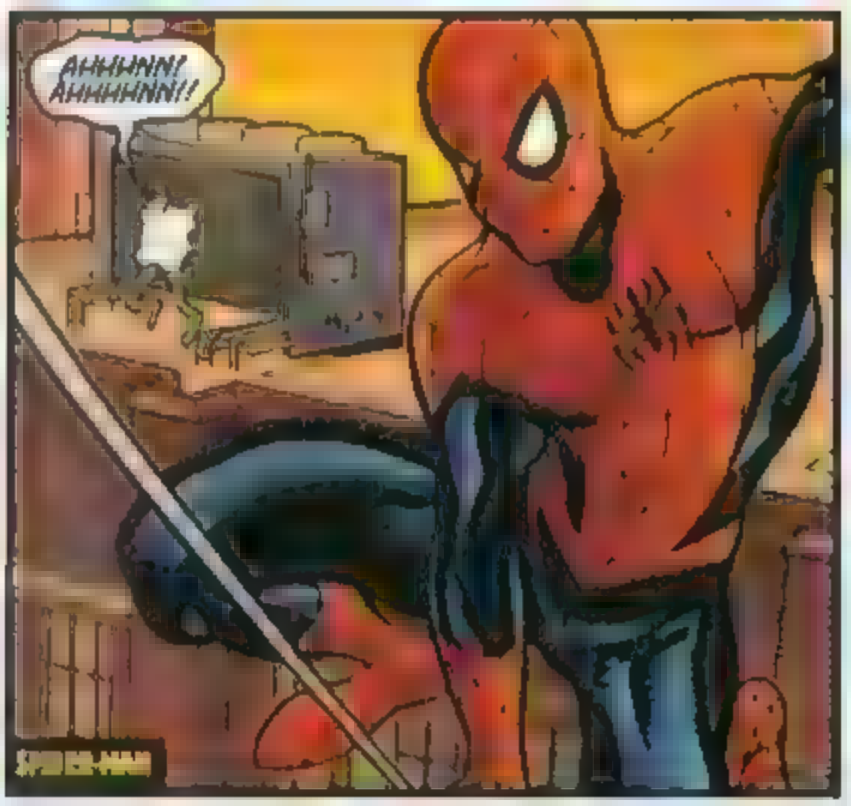
"This is what I've waited my entire career for," said Pérez, who was originally commissioned to draw a JLA/Avengers one-shot in 1982 before feuding between Marvel and DC buried the project. "I'm having the time of my life. Since I'm penciling and inking every page, it's probably the purest art I've ever produced."

Pérez is nearly finished penciling the project and plans to finish inking by the end of the year. Nearly every JLA member and Avengers member are slated to show up somewhere in the mini-series.

1602

Most fans are still deciding what the bigger secret is—Neil Gaiman's super-classified *1602* project or just how Marvel got Gaiman to work for the publisher again after an eight-year absence.

Not much is known about the



planned eight-issue mini-series *1602*, but it is certain that Gaiman and artist Andy Kubert (*Origin*) are on board and trying to get a few issues in the can before it ships next spring. Rumors abound that *1602*—if that's even the name of the top-secret project—will cover everything from a very early look at the Marvel Universe to a future look at what the Marvel U might be in a few centuries. Marvel moles admit that a Dr. Strange-like character may play a key role in the series.

KEVIN SMITH'S 'AMAZING SPIDER-MAN'

He did it for *Green Arrow* and *Daredevil*. Now Kevin Smith wants to turn his take on Spider-Man into an instant hit.

As J. Michael Straczynski and John Romita Jr. move over to a brand-new Spider-Man title in 2003, *Spider-Man/Black Cat* partners Smith and artist Terry Dodson will take over *Amazing*. According to the scribe, while he hasn't nailed his take on Spidey exactly, he's gonna keep the wisecracks flying, much like he did in his *Black Cat* mini-series.

"Spidey's one of the all-time greats to me, but that'll be an easy question to answer in retrospect," said the director of "Chasing Amy" and "Mallrats." "I guess we'll find out when I'm done with my run."

HULK: GRAY

Apparently, redefining Batman, Superman, Spider-Man and Daredevil wasn't enough for writer Jeph Loeb and artist Tim Sale. Now, the duo behind *Batman: The Long Halloween*, *Superman: For All Seasons*, *Spider-Man: Blue* and *Daredevil: Yellow*, want to work their magic on another superhero icon. Get ready for *Hulk: Gray*.

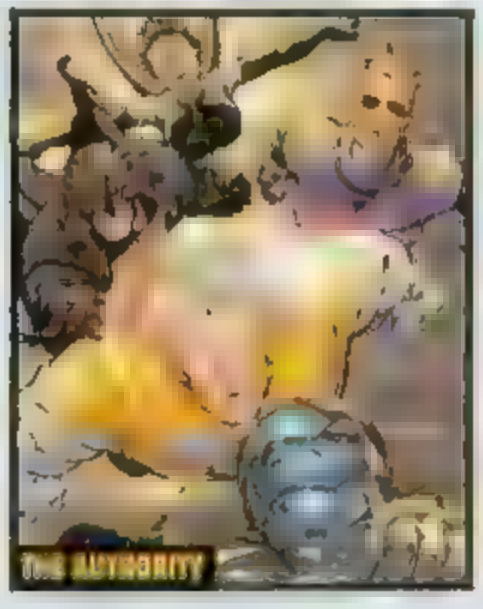
"It's another of the Marvel icons that we love," explained Loeb. "Obviously, having an Ang Lee giant blockbuster movie coming out next year ain't gonna hurt, but this was always the plan. And after I saw Tim draw the Rhino in *Spidey: Blue* #2, that was the clincher. It just had to be."

Loeb said most of *Hulk: Gray* will take place between *Hulk* #1 and *Hulk* #2 of the original series by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. "This is the time when the Hulk was colored gray and we'll explore that," said Loeb. "The period just after his origin, so the world didn't really know what this monster was all about."

BEST OF THE REST

While *1602*, *JLA/Avengers* and Kevin Smith's *Amazing Spider-Man* will definitely rock 2003, other projects—both rumored and confirmed—could make it a year to remember. Take a look.

GEORGE PEREZ'S NEW MONTHLY Written by Barbara Kesel (*The First*) and penciled by Pérez, *Solus*, a new monthly CrossGen series, features Andra Radiant—a legendary adventurer, an accomplished scholar, superb athlete and an unparalleled beauty. She and her band of agents have kept the world of Solus protected for so long that no one can remember what it was like before she came. Is she too good to be true?



10-CENT SUPERMAN COMIC Rumor has it that DC Comics will play off the success of *Batman: The Ten-Cent Adventure* and the recent *Fantastic Four* nine-cent comic and produce a 10-cent Superman comic in early 2003. According to insiders, the book may even launch into a new ongoing Superman series.

G.I. JOE VS. THE X-MEN Marvel insiders say a team-up between the Real American Heroes and the X-Men is set for 2003. Look for the series to take place out of continuity and possibly feature an early Joe team.

ALEX ROSS' JLA PROJECT Beginning with the oversized *JLA: Secret Origins* this November, writer Paul Dini and Ross will retell the JLA's classic origins in double-page spreads. After that, look for Ross and Dini to re-team on another oversized project featuring the JLA in 2003.

THE AUTHORITY RELAUNCH While the Authority will appear in a one-shot entitled *The Authority: Scorched Earth* by writer Robbie Morrison (*2000 A.D.*) and penciler Frazer Irving (*2000 A.D.*) this November, don't be surprised if an ongoing series launches early in 2003. Rumor has it that WildStorm's new mature reader label, Eye of the Storm, is narrowing down creators for a new #1. ■ MC

TURNER'S NEW PROJECTS

2003 will boast *two* new projects from Top Cow superstar Mike Turner (*Fathom*). The first mini-series chronicles a futuristic society on the verge of the apocalypse. Powerful psychic abilities have awakened in an immortal teenager and a jaded fairy must show him how to use these powers.

"He's at that age where his life is ahead of him and she's just so jaded," noted Turner. "Those attitudes are going to play a major role by the time this is said and done."

The second series is a "Lord of the Rings"-style epic that takes place on an alien world inhabited by several distinct elemental races. Each exists in their own separate microcosm until an alien invasion forces them to unite in order to defend their planet. ■ MIKE COTTON & JAMES McDONOUGH

THE BUZZBIN

THE LAST LICENSE The clock is ticking on '80s revival mania, with practically every worthwhile property's comic rights snatched up. About all that's left? "Star Blazers," which is currently in play with a couple of publishers sniffing around.

HULK SMASH FIVE TIMES Marvel is finally getting its media tie-in butt in gear, and is slated to make *Incredible Hulk* weekly in June 2003 to coincide with the "Hulk" movie release. Regular scribe Bruce Jones will reportedly write the five weekly issues in June.

FEELING LIKE A MILLION BUCKS Word is that DC is so pleased with the work that alternative cartoonist Tony Millionaire did in *Bizarro Comics* that the publisher has commissioned a 48-page Batman one-shot from the artist.

CROSSING THE GENERATIONS Rumblings outta Tampa indicate that CrossGen Comics is really looking to live up to its name and do a series of stories by the top names in comics from 1960s Marvel. And we mean the TOP of top names available.

DUNGEONS AND DREAMWAVE Dreamwave is reportedly in negotiations with Hasbro to produce comics based on its *Dungeons and Dragons* and *Magic: The Gathering* role-playing franchises.

KNIGHT MOVES With Joe Quesada back in charge of Marvel Knights, don't be surprised if there's a renewed spotlight put back on the imprint. Reports are already surfacing that there are major plans for the Knights line in 2003, including the move of two Avengers to the imprint.

MUPPET MANIA Riding the wave of nostalgia, the Muppets could be next to receive their own comic. Rumor has it that a big-name publisher is in the initial stages of discussions with Jim Henson Studios to produce a comic series based on the Muppets.

G.I. JOE VS. TRANSFORMERS Sources suggest that Dreamwave and Devil's Due are in negotiations for a possible G.I. Joe/Transformers crossover. Early word suggests each company will create separate books, which will most likely appear as prestige-style one-shots.

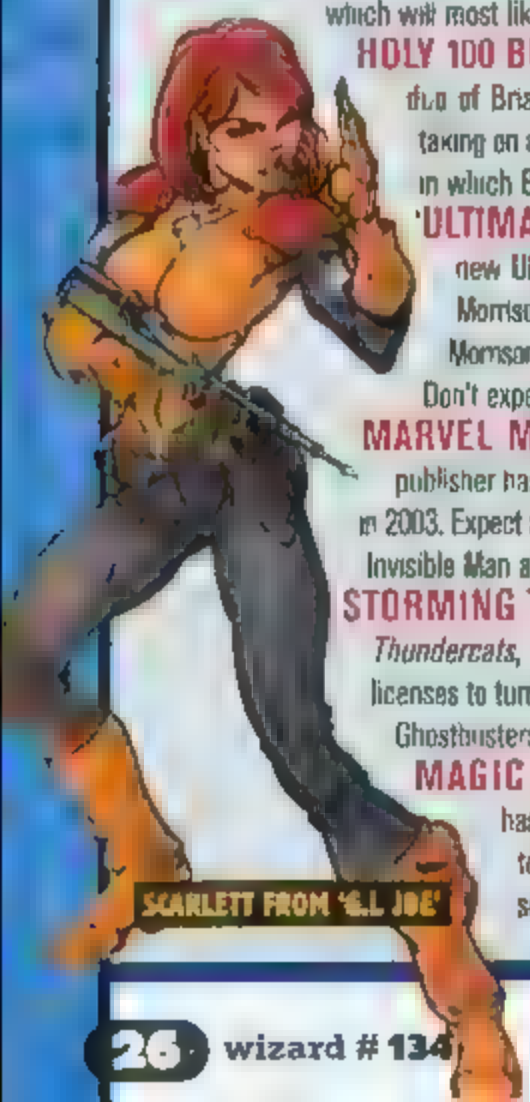
HOLY 100 BULLETS BATMAN! The *100 Bullets* duo of Brian Azzarello and Eduardo Risso may be taking on a Batman mini-series sometime next year in which Bats will face Killer Croc.

ULTIMATE FF ON HOLD The long-awaited new Ultimate series featuring the FF by Grant Morrison (*New X-Men*) is reportedly on hold after Morrison upped his X-Men work to 18 issues a year. Don't expect the series any time before mid-2003.

MARVEL MONSTERS Don't be surprised if the publisher has a few big MAX horror books popping up in 2003. Expect appearances by Dracula, the Wolfman, the Invisible Man and even the Mummy!

STORMING THE GATES Based on the success of *Thundercats*, WildStorm may be searching out new licenses to turn into comics, including Silverhawks and Ghostbusters.

MAGIC GORDON Sources indicate that DC has approached Scott Morse (*Magic Pickle*) to take on a Commissioner Gordon mini-series sometime next year.



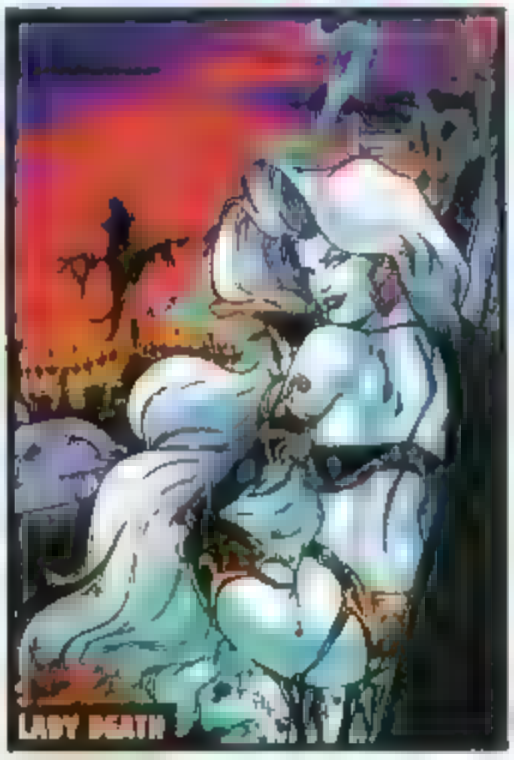
CHAOS! CLOSES SHOP

Publisher forced to file for bankruptcy

After nearly a decade of publishing comics, Chaos! Comics was forced to close its doors permanently. On August 16, the publisher—best known for such gothic-inspired creations as Lady Death and Evil Ernie—filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy. All business operations have ceased and all company assets left will be liquidated with the proceeds to be distributed to creditors and any other outstanding debts.

"Chaos no longer exists," explained President Brian Pulido. "By filing for Chapter 7 bankruptcy, our company is up for liquidation. Chapter 11 is a filing for protection against creditors and for reorganization. Chapter Seven is a filing for liquidation."

Formed in November of 1992, Chaos! quickly rose to the forefront of the comics' scene to become one of the most successful independent publishers. With characters such as Lady Death and Purgatori, the publisher left its mark on the industry by being one of the driving forces behind the "Bad Girl" craze of the early '90s. As the years progressed, the company turned its attention towards licensed properties with comics inspired by the stars of World Wrestling Entertainment and musical acts such as the Insane Clown Posse.



Over the past few years, the publisher's sales continued to diminish to the point where it was no longer economically feasible to stay in business. "The business entity of Chaos! comics was no longer viable," admitted Pulido. "We weren't serving ourselves, our freelancers or suppliers and all of our sales projections for the future didn't look better. Thus was the responsible thing to do."

Unfortunately, this leaves all the company's creations up for grabs. "The rights to those characters will be sold," revealed Pulido. "As for stuff like the animated Lady Death feature, that stuff's still up in the air. To the best of my knowledge, that's something that the courts decide."

The announcement was a shock to many, considering the rampant rumors that Chaos! would seek refuge under the CrossGen or Image umbrellas. However, Pulido insists that those reported scenarios were in fact just rumors.

And while forced to make one of the most difficult decisions of his life, the ever-upbeat creator remains positive about the future.

"We had a great run—it was a dream come true," reminisced Pulido.

"The first thing I'm doing is taking a couple weeks off and just clear my head. From there I'm going to take a look and see what I plan to do next. I haven't made any decisions, but I'm not ruling out anything." ■ JMcD

SALVATORE HAS 'NOVEL' IDEA FOR CROSSGEN

Robert A. Salvatore's next page-turner won't be of the paperback variety—it'll be a comic.

Salvatore's best-selling sword-and-sorcery series of *DemonWars* novels will come alive in comic form at CrossGen Comics' new Code 6 imprint starting in December. And Salvatore will have *another* best seller on his side, as Scott Ciencin, author of over 50 novels including six books in the popular *Dinotopia* series, handles the scripting chores. Ron Wagner (*Punisher*) pencils the first six-issue mini-series, which gives old-time *DemonWars* fans something new from a popular supporting character.

"The series starts 30 years before the first book," said Ciencin. "Our focus is the young barbarian Andacanavar. He's a supporting character throughout *DemonWars* as an old man, but we're going way back and dealing with the forging of a legend."

Each *DemonWars* arc will run six issues before being collected into trades. "We're still dealing with Bob's world and his history, but we have a free hand and broad tapestry," Ciencin continued.

Even Salvatore, who's just learning the comic biz, may join the fun. "I'm amazed at what you can do in these graphic novels!" he exclaimed. "You can get half of one of my books into a single comic! I'm going to have to learn more about this, so I can write one myself."

■ JIM McLAUCHLIN

DC SERIES A REAL COP-OUT

Being a cop in Gotham City gives a new meaning to the phrase 'thankless job."

However, in DC's all-new monthly series *Gotham Central*, co-written by Batman staples Greg Rucka and Ed Brubaker with pencils by Michael Lark, Gotham's finest finally get a chance to step out of Batman's shadow.

"*Gotham Central* will essentially tell what it's like to be a cop in Gotham," explained Rucka. "Basically what it's like to work on a police force that's totally corrupt, and when things get out of hand, the commissioner turns on a big light and a vigilante dressed up as a bat comes in to save the day."

Kicking off this December, *Gotham Central* will focus on the GCPD's Major Crimes Unit—an elite force of Gotham's best detectives from Rucka's run on *Detective Comics*. And while Batman and his caped counterparts might make a cameo appearance sporadically throughout the series, Rucka doesn't plan to make them integral characters.

"You'll see them as the GCPD has always seen them—as a shadow or the sound of a cape rustling in the background," said Rucka.

Despite the talent behind the series, *Gotham Central* took nearly two years to be greenlit by DC.

"I had torn a page out of the back of *Wizard* a few years back where fans had voted Commissioner Gordon as the 'Best Supporting Character,'" remembered Rucka. "So I approached Paul Levitz and said, 'We gotta do a series about this!' But it wasn't until we got about three issues in the bag before people started to come around to the idea." ■ CASEY SELIAS

NEWSFLASHES

FIRESTORM'S A'BREWIN' DC has announced that Mike Carey (*Lucifer*) will write an upcoming *Firestorm* mini-series scheduled for sometime next year. While no artist has been announced yet, rumors abound that Carey's *Lucifer* penciller Peter Gross is on the short list. Jim Lee has designed the new costume, which he describes "Firestorm's been out with Tony Stark's party clothes."

SHAZAM BONE Jeff Smith went on a vacation from his wildly popular comic-universe series *Bone* comes to an end in February 2003. DC has announced that the comic creator will write and draw *Shazam: Monster Society of Evil*, a four-issue prestige-format miniseries slated for late 2003 or early 2004. The series will take a comical look at the hero's villains and also serves as Smith's first foray into mainstream comics.

ROBOTECH RETURNS WildStorm has enlisted yet another '80s icon for a run with the wildly popular anime-inspired *Robotech* universe. Writer Jay Faerber (*Noble Causes*) and UDON will serve as the creative team on the monthly title, which will pick up where the animated series left off. Look for the comic debut this winter.

COLORFUL LANGUAGE Writer Alexander Irvine and his friend, Image will release a new fantasy graphic novel, *Four-Letter Words* sometime in early 2003. Broken down into four mini-series, the 48-page graphic novel will focus on the effects of four-letter words on people's lives and will include stories from Brett Lewis, Keith Giffen, David Lapham and many more.

DON'T FEAR THE CREEPER Writer Jason Hall (*Platoon*) and comics artist Chiang Wang (*Mad Dog Hall*) are the latest filmmakers to sign on to the Creeper, titled *Jeepers Creepers*, which is set for 2002. Starring the Creeper from Batman #182's issue, where he meets a lovely young lady who turns out to be evil, you guessed it—the Creeper.

PENCIL MOVEMENT With Aphrodite Awesome's regular artist Olivier Coipel becomes the new penciller after a spell at Wildstorm by Alan Davis (*Marvel Knights Nextwave*), Gary Frank (*Supreme*) and Mahmud Asrar (*Supreme*). Coipel will pencil the Son of Thunder's next eight issues, beginning with *Thor* #[illegible]. Stay tuned for the newest info.

REVISITING SUPES' DEATH

Like any good DVD, Dan Jurgens wants to give you a little something extra. This November, Jurgens writes and pencils *Superman: Day of Doom*, a four-issue weekly mini-series that introduces Ty Duffy, a new *Daily Planet* reporter assigned to write a feature on the 10-year anniversary of Superman's death from Jurgens' 1992 epic *The Death of Superman*.

"If [*The Death of Superman*] were a DVD, this is the 20 minutes of never-before-seen footage—it's bonus material that adds a lot of flavor," said Jurgens.

Day of Doom follows Duffy as he interviews everyone affected by the day Doomsday killed the Man of Steel. From Booster Gold and Blue Beetle of the JLA to Clark Kent and Lois Lane to Superman's greatest villains—Duffy tracks just how Superman's death changed Metropolis, the DCU and even the comic book industry.

"I see this as a companion piece," said Jurgens. "There was never anything like [*The Death of Superman*] before and never afterwards. [*Day of Doom*] isn't a retelling of the *Death of Superman*; this puts it in context, with the benefit of hindsight."

Duffy takes center stage and discovers Superman and his supporting cast were far from the only people affected by the hero's death.

"This will enhance the original story," said Jurgens. "So much of that story was action—this story shows how that action changed everything." ■ NK

HEAT INDEX

No one loves comics like *Wizard*—here's some cool things we read and saw this month.

GEOFF JOHNS' AVENGERS (Marvel) *JSA* writer Geoff Johns did two things to get us excited about the Avengers: he's given first tier members like Captain America, the Vision and Iron Man personalities again and he's brought back the action. Even B-list bad guys like Mr. Hyde wreck half of New York—that is until the Avengers show up!

LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN VOL. II (WildStorm/DC) Alan Moore's accomplished what few Hollywood types could—create a sequel that may surpass the original in terms of greatness. Moore's brought back old favorites like the Invisible Man, Mina Murray, Captain Nemo and Allan Quatermain and placed them in an ingeniously original adventure—battling a Martian invasion of Victorian England!

CATWOMAN: SELINA'S BIG SCORE (DC Comics) Writer/artist Darwyn Cooke crafts a scintillating crime opus with this original hardcover graphic novel. *Selina's Big Score* delivers a shiv to the stomach with its noir backdrop, gorgeous color pallete and a plot that's reminiscent of all the great caper flicks. A *tour de force* for Cooke.

SPIDER-MAN'S TANGLED WEB #16 (Marvel) There's a reason why Marvel has been hyping up newfound creators Daniel Way and Leandro Fernandez. Way's hilarious take on second-rate Spidey villains like Tombstone and Rocket Racer had us rolling, and Fernandez's wicked art served as a perfect compliment to the story.

HIP FLASK: UNNATURAL SELECTION (Comiccraft) The art of Ladrönn steals the show on Comicraft's debut series. It's been far too long since we last saw Ladrönn on a monthly title, but after checking out the preview—chock fulla dynamic splash pages and some of the baddest half-human, half-animal characters we've ever seen—it was definitely worth the wait.

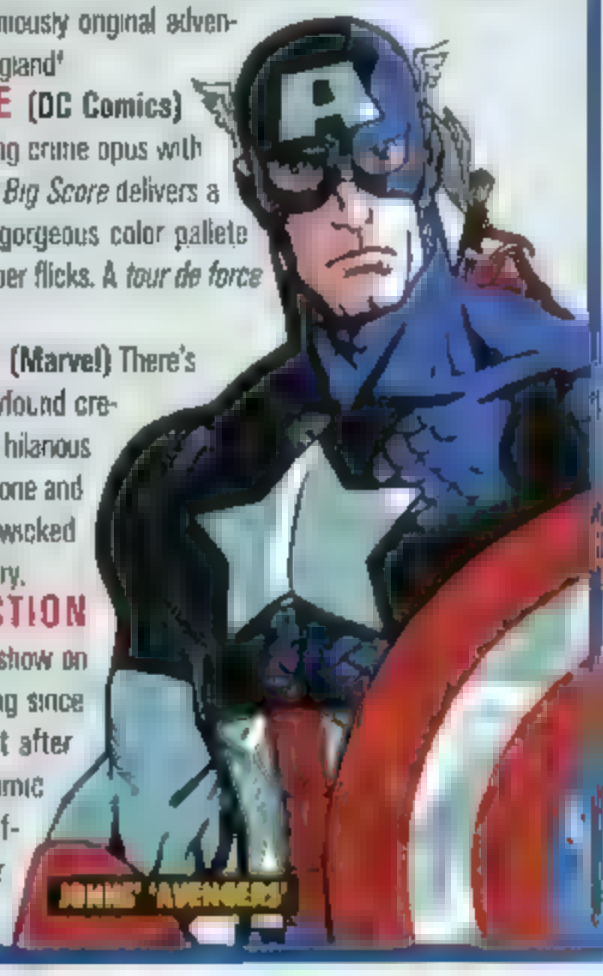


IMAGE HOLDS OUT FOR NEW HERO LINE

These aren't your father's superheroes—or your older brother's for that matter

After a lengthy hiatus, superheroes have returned to the big "I" with the launch of an all-new superhero based line

Image Publisher Jim Valentino feels now is the perfect time for a comeback of superheroic proportions.

As Valentino explained: "I think the climate is right, if they're well-executed and well-conceived. A cursory glance at the Top 100 comics should answer that."

Image plans to kick things off this January with five new superhero titles

THE CLOCK-MAKER (Writer: Jim Krueger, Artist: Matt Smith) After nearly 200 years, a divine clock located in Switzerland is a week away from opening a doorway to heaven. Now it's up to Hans, head of the clockworkers, and female clock-watcher Astrid, to defend the portal from a sinister evil

DOMINION (Plots/Breakdowns: Keith Giffen, Finishes Claude St. Aubin, Co-Plots: Ross Richie) A group of freedom fighters unite to liberate Australia from tyrannical superhumans spawned from alien bacteria in a series Giffen refers to as "'Invasion of the Body Snatchers' with superheroes."

FIREBREATHER (Writer: Phil Hester, Artist: Andy Kuhn) The result of an intimate encounter between a fire-breathing Godzilla-type and a human female, *Firebreather* follows a youngster juggling his time between going to school and destroying the world.

INVINCIBLE (Writer: Robert Kirkman, Artist: Cory Walker) A hard-luck teen must learn to cope with the stress of preparing for college, talking to girls and controlling the superpowers he's inherited from his father—who just happens to be one of the world's most beloved superheroes.

VENTURE (Writer: Jay Faerber, Artist: Jamal Igle) A low-key superhero and a self-serving reporter form a tenuous business arrangement after the reporter discovers our hero's secret identity.

While developing consistent continuity may be the line's focus, there will be no mandate for books to "crossover."

"We're not bound by [continuity]," revealed Giffen. "Of course if you're going to blow up Chicago, you should let someone know, because they may need Chicago tomorrow."

Over the course of 2003, more books will be introduced to the line, including an all-new *Shadowhawk* series by Valentino that features a newer, younger protagonist. Plans also call for an all-star Image team book. Finally, titles such as *Savage Dragon* and *Noble Causes* will eventually be "integrated" into the line as well. ■ JMD

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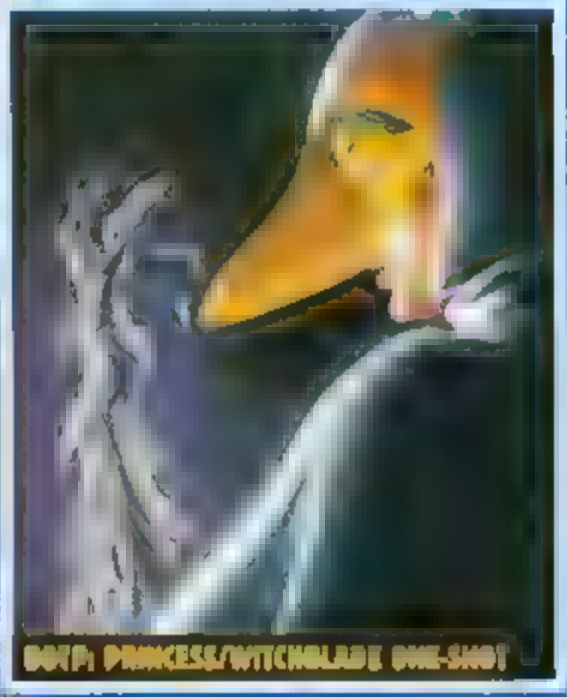


DOUBLE PRINCESS/WITCHBLADE ONE-SHOT

'THUNDERBOLTS' GETS A RELAUNCH JOLT

They say lightning never strikes twice—but what about thunder? With January's issue #76 of *Thunderbolts*, series creator/writer Fabian Nicieza steps aside for new writer John Arcudi (*Doom Patrol*) to take over and revamp the series, much like Peter Milligan and Mike Allred did with the much-heralded *X-Force* (now called *X-Statix*) over a year ago.

According to Editor Andrew Lis, none of the current *Thunderbolts* cast will make it into Arcudi's stint on the title.

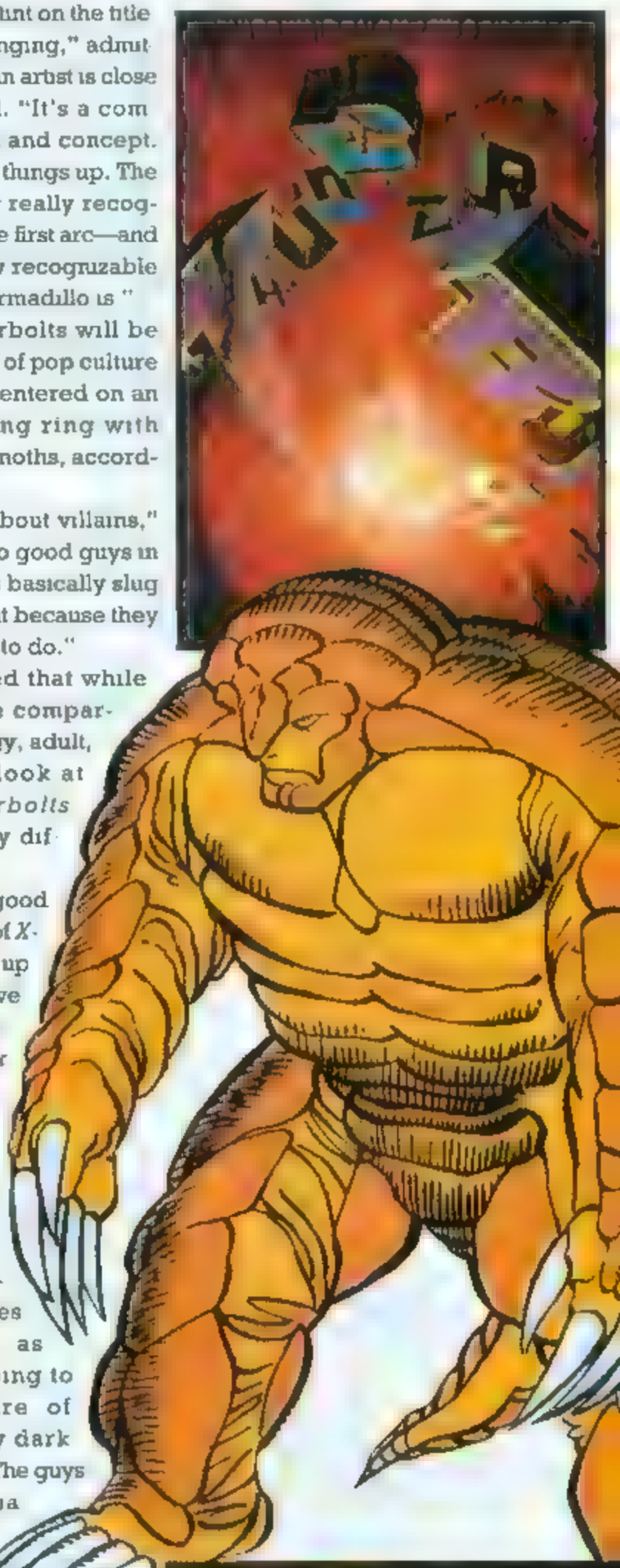
"Everything's changing," admitted Lis, who also said an artist is close to being announced. "It's a completely different cast and concept. We're going to shake things up. The Armadillo is the only really recognizable character in the first arc—and I'm not even sure how recognizable a character like the Armadillo is."

The new Thunderbolts will be much more reflective of pop culture and society and be centered on an underground boxing ring with superpowered behemoths, according to Lis.

"It's still a book about villains," said Lis. "There are no good guys in this book. These guys basically slug each others' brains out because they don't know what else to do."

Lis also explained that while there are inevitable comparisons to *X-Statix*'s edgy, adult, darkly humorous look at mutants, *Thunderbolts* really goes in a very different direction.

"They did such a good job with the relaunch of *X-Statix*, it's tough to live up to that," Lis said. "If we try to compare ourselves to *X-Statix* people are going to say, 'Oh, this isn't really *X-Statix*.' I'd just say it's got the same mentality but these books are going to be very different. *X-Statix* focuses on superheroes as celebrity, we're going to focus on the allure of celebrity—the dirty dark side of wanting fame. The guys in *X-Statix* are media darlings, the cast in *Thunderbolts* are more like Mike Tyson and Don King." ■ MC



BEYOND THUNDERBOLTS: The new *Thunderbolts* series features supervillains like the Armadillo (above) starring in underground "fight club"-style brawls in an attempt to get famous

ELEKTRA BOOGALOO

One Elektra a month just wasn't enough for Greg Rucka.

The regular writer of the monthly *Elektra* series launches *Ultimate Daredevil & Elektra* in November with *X-Treme X-Men* artist Salvador Larroca. The four-issue mini-series will find Elektra and Daredevil's alter ego, Matt Murdock, both in college at Columbia University

"This isn't Elektra as we know her," said Rucka. "She's a second-generation Greek kid from Queens. Her father owns a string of dry cleaning stores. She's a happy young lady. This isn't the Elektra anyone expects."

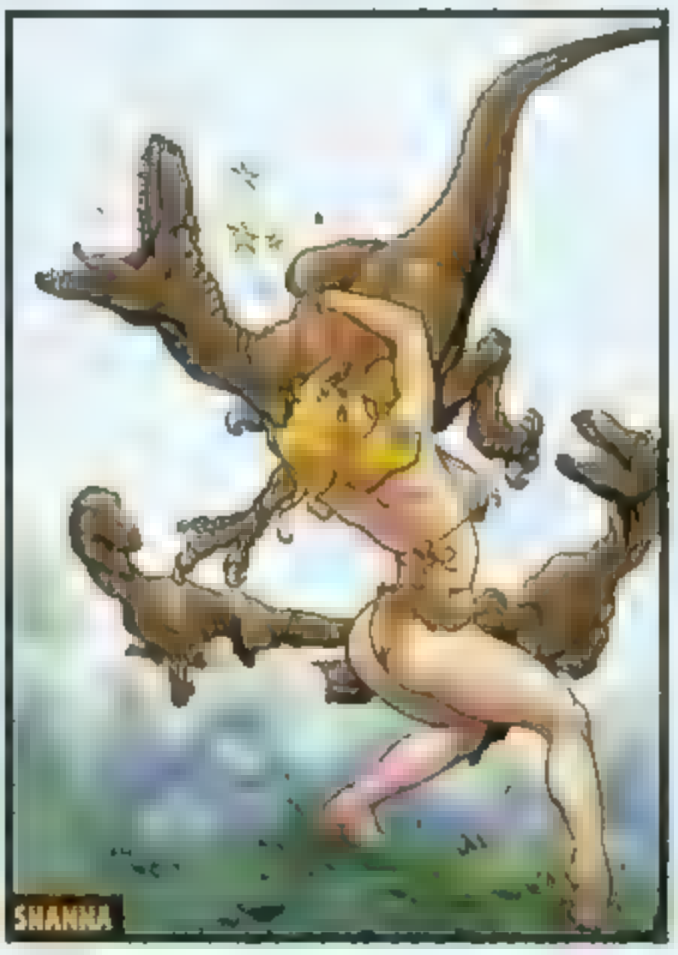
This won't be the Daredevil fans expect either. While DD showed up in *Ultimate Team-Up* #6-#8 and Elektra appeared in the *Ultimate Spider-Man Special*, this series will take a step back and reveal where DD and Elektra first met and fell in love

According to the writer, Matt Murdock is in his second year at Columbia when Elektra comes into his life, and while you won't see the classic DD duds, there will be some costumed action in the series, which is meant to capitalize on the Ben Affleck "Daredevil" film opening on Feb. 14, 2003.

As for the antagonists in the story, Rucka said that at the heart of the tale, there will be very rich and very powerful people without superpowers. "Elektra's going to run into a situation where she has to make decisions that have prices," explained Rucka. "And it's a decision Matt won't agree with." ■ MC

CHO FALLS IN JUNGLE LOVE

Frank Cho knows that bad girls make for good comics. That's why Marvel has just signed Cho of *Liberty Meadows* fame to do what he does best—draw beautiful women.



Cho will focus his bodacious talents on Shanna the She-devil, a jungle vixen plucked from Marvel's past. While both old and new series featured dinosaurs and leopard bikinis, little will remain the same as Cho completely recreates Shanna's character for an eight-issue, bi-monthly series slated for next spring.

Cho describes the title as "'Jurassic Park' meets 'Tremors' meets *Cavewoman*." Expect a cliffhanger every month, along with heavy doses of action and adventure. Marvel Editor-In-Chief Joe Quesada and series editor Alex Alonso agreed to publish the series under Marvel's mature MAX line, not wanting anything to get in the way of Cho's self appointed "over-the-top" stories and art. ■ DAVE MARSHALL

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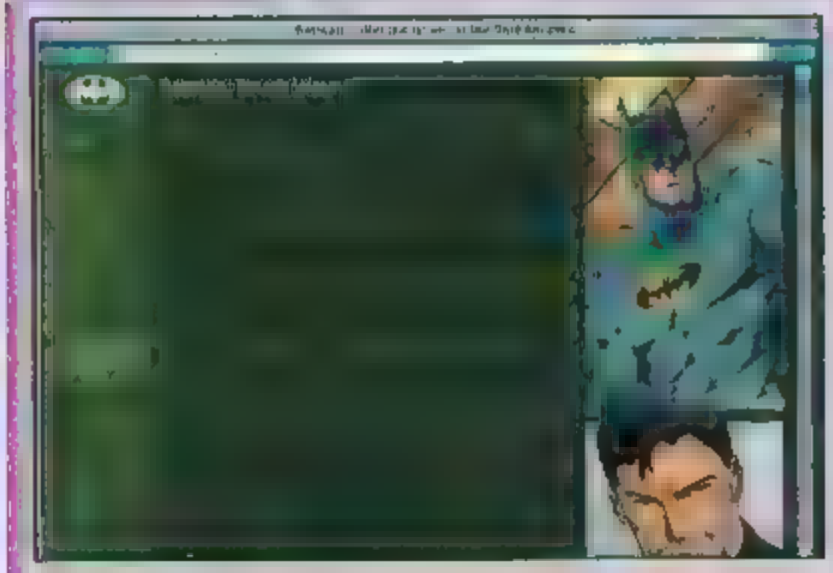


BATMAN: COLLECTED ISSUES OF THE DARK KNIGHT

www.rasalghul.co.uk

With Jim Lee and Jeph Loeb's hyper-anticipated *Batman* run hitting shelves this month, now's the time to catch up on all things batty. This sleekly designed Website allows you to navigate quickly and easily through a comprehensive database of past Batman comics. Search the Bat-titles by storyarc, character appearance or creative team. Browse a cover gallery that extends back to *Batman* #1. You can even plot the shortest route from the Batcave to Arkham Asylum using the Gotham City map

OCTOBER

1 Rob Liefeld returns to comics this month with *Youngblood: Bloodsport* (Arcade), featuring the words of talented scribe Mark Millar. Official Millar Website www.millarworld.biz

9 It's Claremonth at Marvel! And to celebrate, writer Chris Claremont brings back Kitty Pryde in *Mekanix*, a six-issue miniseries. Kitty Pryde fansite www.kittypryde.com Also, *Tomb Raider* #25 kicks off Top Cow's three-part "Endgame" crossover Official site: www.topcow.com

22 "ET: The Extra-Terrestrial," Steven Spielberg's love letter to aliens, debuts on DVD today Official site www.et20.com

23 *Ghost in the Shell 2 Man-Machine Interface* by Masamune Shirow finally arrives from Dark Horse Comics and Studio Proteus after years of waiting. Official site www.darkhorse.com

31 Happy Halloween! Be sure to dress up as one of your favorite comic characters for trick-or-treating. Stumped for ideas? Check out the results of *Wizard*'s Costume Contest on page 82. Cool site: www.halloween-online.com

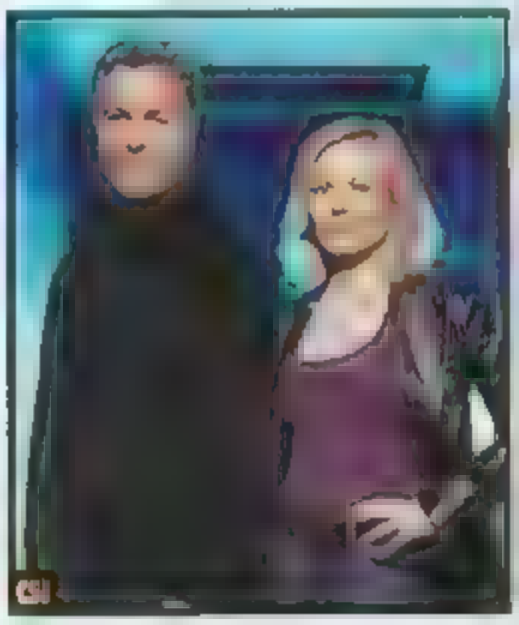
GUILTY PLEASURE OF THE MONTH

www.iloveegg.com/wwopen_and/and04.htm

TV'S 'ALIAS,' 'CSI' MADE INTO COMICS

You may already be watching the next great comic.

At least that's what a number of publishers are counting on, bringing a slew of popular licensed TV and movie properties to a comic shop near you. Marvel, Dark Horse and two hot new entries into the comics field—Arcade Comics and IDW Publishing are rolling out licensed comics in the near future, ranging from popular TV shows like "CSI" and "Alias" to smash movies like "xXx" and "Shrek."



"There's only so much time in a week to watch these shows," explained Jimmy Jay of Arcade Comics "These comics give the show a broader base. It brings the mainstream audience into comic stores

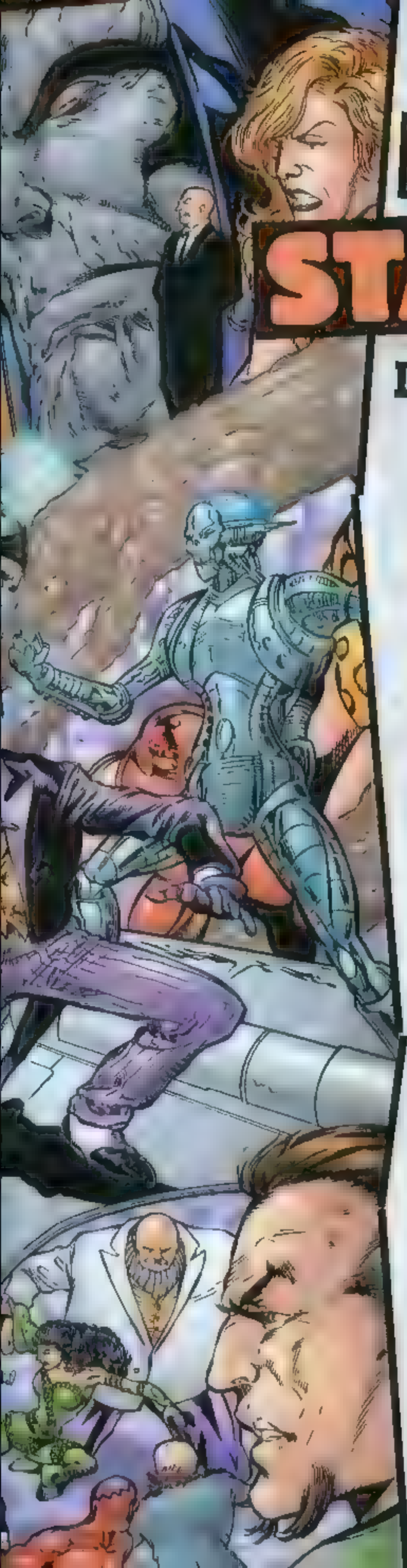
Here's some of your favorite shows and movies, coming soon to a comic store near you

• "Alias: Agent Bristo" from Arcade Comics hits this December, based on everyone's favorite redheaded spy J.J. Abrams, creator of the TV series, will write the series The debut #0 issue boasts the artistic talents of Andy Park and Rob Liefeld

• "CSI," a five-part mini-series from IDW Publishing, is based on the CBS white-hot forensics drama. Max Allan Collins, who's written several *CSI* novels, will pen the series while Gabriel Rodriguez and Ashley Wood will handle the art. Rodriguez will capture the coarse grit and bright lights of Las Vegas, while Wood will apply his surreal style to the forensics scenes, echoing the split visual experience of the TV show

• Dark Horse Comics, notorious for its success with licensed properties such as *Star Wars* and *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer*, looks to scoop up a few summer blockbusters. Licenses currently in negotiation include *xXx* featuring the further adventures of Xander Cage (played by Vin Diesel in the summer blockbuster); *Shrek*, spotlighting background characters from the animated film; and *Reign of Fire*, bringing all the flames and fury of dragons taking over the modern world from the silver screen to the printed page.

• On the heels of the critically acclaimed summer hit *Road to Perdition*—based on the graphic novel by Max Allan Collins for DC's Paradox Press in 1998—Marvel Comics may snag him for a sequel. While contracts have yet to be signed, Collins is interested in writing a sequel to the original story for Marvel, possibly even two. ■ DM



LAST VILLAIN STANDING

comic battles you never thought you'd see

MARVEL VILLAINS VS. DC VILLAINS

The battle... The Infinity Gauntlet will be his—thus Darkseid swears! Craving the fabled item in the belief it will unlock the secret of "The Source" and allow him to seize the wellspring of the New Gods' power, the Lord of Apokolips opens a Boom Tube to the Marvel Universe. Flooding Earth-Marvel with a horde of supervillains plucked from the DCU, Darkseid begins his quest as the criminals—all under the influence of Darkseid—hunt down any costumed champions who may stand in their way of their "master."

Seeking out their opponents before they can be alerted to their presence, the army of DC villains attacks the greatest stockpile of superhumans in the Marvel Universe...the maximum security supervillain prison known as The Vault!

Using the confusion to their advantage, the DC villains strike first and begin decimating Marvel's ranks: Deathstroke K.O.'s the Taskmaster, Gorilla Grodd devours Sabretooth's body and mind while the Green Goblin matches wits with the Joker and comes up short. As the conflagration escalates, more of Marvel's villains are drawn into the fray. Magneto entombs Sinestro, Juggernaut crushes Solomon Grundy while Ultron and Brainiac merge into a new being and exit this plane of existence. The slugfests continue as both teams begin to dwindle through death and desertion. Captain Cold puts the Blizzard on ice, Tiger Shark eviscerates Black Manta and, amidst the confusion, Mr. Hyde uses the opportunity to finally kill Cobra, even though they're both from the Marvel U.

Meanwhile, a battered and bloodied Darkseid steadies himself—and after one last pause to study his surprisingly resourceful foe—unleashes the dreaded Omega Beams and disintegrates the one-time master of the Infinity Gauntlet, Thanos, mad God of Titan! Preparing to take what he has learned and claim the Gauntlet as his own, Darkseid is staggered by a blast from behind. Turning to see who has the audacity to strike him, the Dark Lord of Apokolips is brought to one knee by a second blast. "Who... who dares? ?" Darkseid stammers as he begins to rise, a third blast—followed by a fourth, fifth and sixth blow—smashing the New God back to the ground unconscious, as an armored figure steps from the shadows.

"Doom dares, miscreant!" the monarch of Latveria sneers as he steps over Darkseid's unmoving form. "And with the whereabouts of the Infinity Gauntlet mine, Doom shall first deal with the rest of your pitiful invasion force, and then Richards' day of reckoning... nay, the *world's* day of reckoning—shall be at hand! The gauntleted hand of *Doom!*"

[illegible] PAUL JIMENEZ AND ANDY KUNDEY

Perfect

By James McDonough

Dark

Paul Jenkins and Dale Keown [illegible] Darkness Back with Its Most Brutal Protagonist Yet to Date

THE DARKNESS

Top Cow wants to make fans afraid of the dark all over again.

This November, one of the company's biggest icons crawls from the shadows to reclaim the spotlight when *The Darkness* relaunches courtesy of *Origin* writer Paul Jenkins and artist Dale Keown (*Hulk: The End*).

A hedonistic hitman whose passion for violence is rivaled only by his lust for women, Jackie Estacado found his world turned upside down when he realized his lineage had cursed him with the supernatural force known as the Darkness. In the final issue of the first *Darkness* series (2001's issue #40), the anti-hero took his own life in an attempt to avenge a murdered loved one.

But after the events of this fall's "End Game" storyline, Estacado finds himself with a new lease on life, thanks to the rejuvenating power of the Darkness. The new series promises to bring the character back to his gritty roots, providing fans with more realistic stories that concentrate on making Jackie more identifiable.

"This is much more a Mafia story with a supernatural twist to it," reveals Jenkins. "We're trying to re-establish Jackie as a person and an interesting character. It's the story of a guy searching for an identity. Being an orphan, Jackie's never really belonged—the only family he knows is the Mob.

"And as far as the supernatural goes," adds Jenkins, "the Darkness is a lot more disturbing this time around."

But Estacado isn't the only one making a comeback. The new series also marks the creator Dale Keown's return to a monthly comic. A former Image superstar, Keown can't wait to give fans the fright of their life.

"We want the Darkness to be scary," says Keown. "Sometimes the less you see [of] something, the scarier it is. So I'll be playing with a lot of shadows and limited light sources."

Jenkins couldn't be more pleased with his collaborator. "He's a great storyteller first and foremost," explains the writer. "Dale's recognized for being a great artist, but many people overlook his ability to tell a story. His work on *Darkness* is going to blow people away."

The story unfolds with Estacado returning to a broken and meaningless life. Refusing an offer to return to the "family" and work for the menacing Cousin Paulie, Estacado watches in horror as the orphanage he grew up in explodes, killing hundreds of children. Jackie Estacado now has a mission of retribution, but can he fulfill it with a newfound fear of the dark?

Can't wait until November for your dose of dread and dark humor? Then close your eyes and turn the page as Jackie Estacado starts executing his revenge in this exclusive five-page *Wizard* preview—but don't say we didn't warn you!

PACKER

SO, WHAT HAPPENED, NINO? WAY I HEARD IT, YOU SOLD ESTACADO DOWN THE RIVER TO PAULIE, HUH?

HEY, THAT LITTLE PUNK WAS THE FIRST IN THE WATER WITH A PADDLE. YOU MESS WITH THE FAMILY, THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS.

YEAH, WELL GET THIS: THAT WAS THE SAME ORPHANAGE FRANKIE FRANCHETTI PICKED UP ESTACADO FROM WHEN HE WAS A LITTLE KID.

IS THAT RIGHT? IT'S A SMALL WORLD.

HAW! HEHH. PAULIE HAD HIM WATCH THE WHOLE THING! CAN YOU IMAGINE THE LOOK ON HIS FACE—?

-GKK-

JESUS! GET DOWN!

AAH!

BLAM!

BLAM!

NN-AGH! >HUFF!<

BLAM!

BLAM!

PAK

PAK

HEY! I GOT A MESSAGE FOR ANY OF YOU LITTLE SCABS THAT MANAGE TO GET OUT ALIVE! YOU TELL COUSIN PAULIE HE'S ALREADY A DEAD MAN!

YEAH? WELL, I GOT YOUR MESSAGE RIGHT HERE, ESTACADO, YOU DUMB SON OF A —

JESUS, TONY -- GET THE HELL DOWN! YOU'RE GIVING AWAY OUR POSITION!

BLAM!

GH-UHH!

HE'S PICKING US OFF! KILL THE FRIGGIN' LIGHTS!

NO.

CLICK

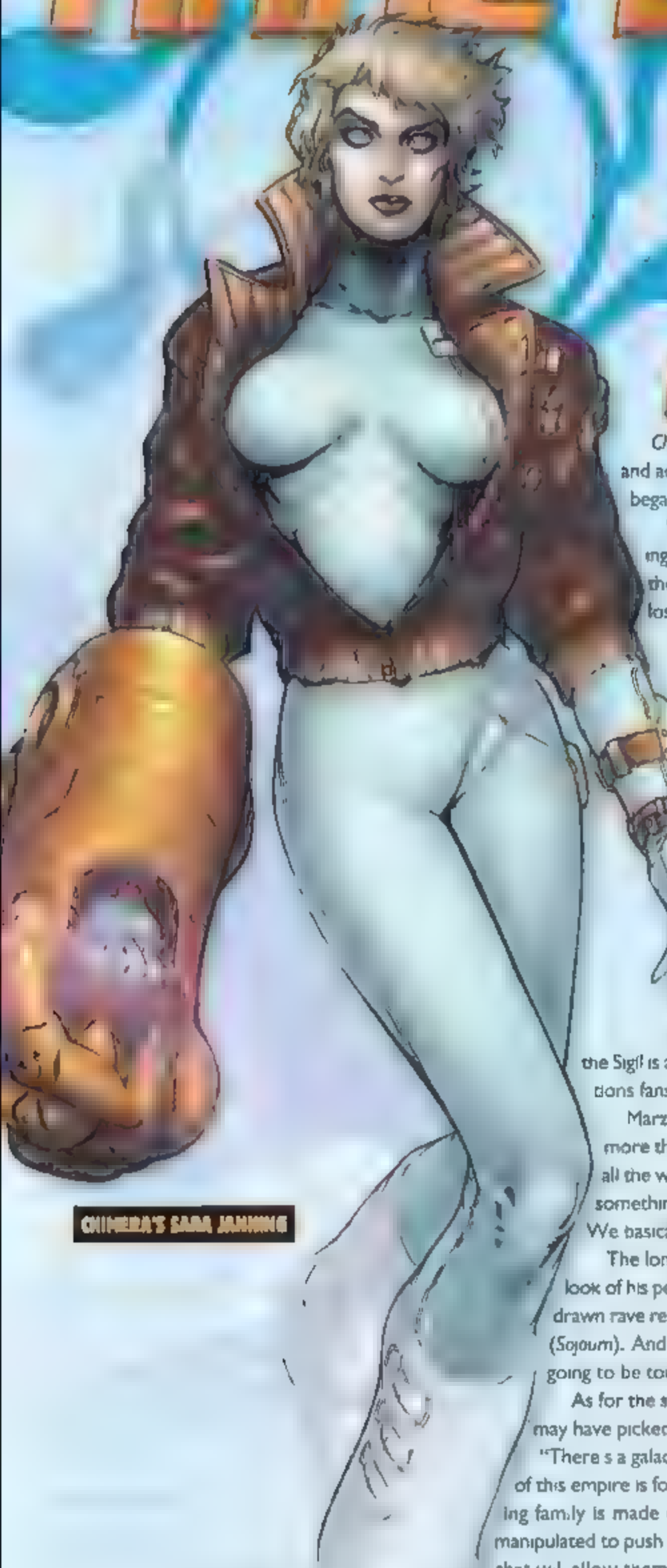
I HEAR A SCREAM AND I REALIZE IT'S ME.

LIKE IT? CHECK OUT *THE DARKNESS #1* ON SALE IN NOVEMBER FOR MORE!

RARE BREED

Artist **BRANDON PETERSON** pulls quadruple duty on CrossGen's newest ongoing title, **'CHIMERA,'** a hardcore sci-fi tale about the genetics of the Sigil

By Mike Cotton



CHIMERA'S SARA JANNING

CrossGen has a reputation for working its artists hard. Just ask Brandon Peterson—he's doing the work of four creators on his latest project.

Chimera, the Tampa-based publisher's newest series, debuts in December and according to the artist, it features the purest expression of his art since he began penciling comics over a decade ago.

"I'm penciling, inking, coloring, co-plotting and sometimes digitally painting this entire book," gushes Peterson. "Sometimes, I start working on it and then look at the clock and it's 4 a.m. I'm having a blast on this book. I get lost in it."

Chimera gets its name from the Greek mythological beast which sports a lion's head, a goat's body and a serpent's tail, but it's also a term in genetic scientific circles representing the combining of different genetic material in one organism.

"Our lead character, Sara Janning, is running from something that you won't find out about for a few issues," says Peterson. "She's actually out with a drilling crew; that's as far away as you can get. But she's also got a Sigil and we find out that the Sigil changes its bearers on a genetic level. Even if your Sigil was removed, you'd still have the power because it changes you."

Peterson says while *Chimera* takes place far away from any of the other inhabitants of the CrossGen Universe, it still ties into that universe and may even reveal some new details about the mysterious Sigil. "By the time we get to the end of this story, fans of the CrossGen Universe will have a much better understanding of what the Sigil is and what it does," adds writer and co-plotter Ron Marz. "It'll answer questions fans have had for a long time."

Marz, who co-plots and scripts *Chimera* with Peterson, explains that while he's more than happy to help shape the series, the title is really the artist's pet project all the way. "[Peterson] just knew he wanted to do something science fiction and something large scale," reveals Marz. "Something more 'Dune' than 'Star Wars.' We basically framed the entire story together."

The long nights and quadruple duty have paid off for Peterson, though. The new look of his pencils, along with digitally manipulated backgrounds and 3-D modeling, have drawn rave reviews from other CrossGen pros like Bart Sears (*The Path*) and Greg Land (*Sojourn*). And with a hot new blonde bombshell acting as the title's leading lady, it's going to be tough for readers to tear their eyes off the pages.

As for the series' desolate, polar setting, Marz says *Chimera*'s on-the-run female lead may have picked a good hiding place, she didn't necessarily pick the right one.

"There's a galactic empire that controls the sector this story's set in," Marz says. "Much of this empire is founded on the concept of genetic purity and evolutionary purity. The ruling family is made up of literally gods and monsters. They've been bred and genetically manipulated to push them further up the evolutionary scale. But they're missing that one link that will allow them to truly be at the top of the scale."

Hooked yet? You should be. Check out the exclusive debut of *Chimera* on the next six pages!

CALCULATING X AXIS

COME ON, WHAT'RE YOU DOING OUT THERE, DRAGGIN' YER BUTT?

DON'T MIND ME SAYING SO

BUT MY BUTT IS THE LAST THING I WANT ON YOUR MIND.

KEEP YOUR THERMSUIT ON, I'M ALMOST DONE

OKAY, WE'RE GOOD TAKE IT AWAY, TRAWLER

THEN BACK UP, UNLESS YOU WANT YOUR BUTT HAULED AWAY WITH IT.

OH, BITE ME

YOU KNOW BETTER THAN TO PUT THOUGHTS LIKE THAT INTO MY HEAD...

...I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO SLEEP TONIGHT.

LIKE YOU WON'T BE DRINKING YOURSELF INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS AS SOON AS THE SHIFT ENDS.

EVERYBODY NEEDS A **HOBBY**, RIGHT?

HEY, THAT FINALLY THE COMPANY TRANSPORT?

YEAH, ONLY A WEEK LATE THIS TIME AT LEAST WE'LL HAVE SOME FRESH HANDS FOR THE FIELDS.

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF I LIKE THE OVERTIME..

. AND SEEMS LIKE THE TRANSPORT ALWAYS BRINGS AT LEAST ONE **PROBLEM** WITH IT.

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? SEREVAN'S NOT EXACTLY A **HUB WORLD.**

PLACE **THIS FAR** OFF THE IMPERIUM'S SPACE-LANES IS **BOUND** TO ATTRACT ITS SHARE OF PEOPLE TRYING TO HIDE.

NOT THAT **YOU'D** KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THAT.

LOOK, LOVE TO STAY AND CHAT, BUT SHIFT'S JUST ABOUT OVER.

...AND I'VE GOT AN APPOINTMENT TO KEEP BACK AT THE BASE.

SHIFT TWO COMPLETE. COME TO MAMA AND RACK YOUR CUTTERS, SHIFT THREE NEEDS ITS TOYS. ALL TRAWLERS BACK TO BAYS.

WHAT'S WITH THE MEAT WAGON? WE FINALLY GOT RELIEF CREWS ON THE WAY? THESE DOUBLE-SHIFTS ARE KILLING ME.

IF YOU MEAN A BUNCH OF ROOKIES WHO DON'T KNOW HARD ICE FROM A SKATING RINK, YEAH, WE GOT RELIEF CREWS

OH, I'M SURE I'LL FIND SOME-BODY.

BUT YOU'RE MORE LIKELY TO GET KILLED BY ONE OF THEM THAN A DOUBLE-SHIFT.

SPB Dispatch

SPB Arrivals
WELCOME TO SEREVAN PERMANENT BASE.

SPB Arrivals
ALL PASSENGERS PROCEED TO ASSIGNED AREAS.

SPB Arrivals
DO NOT LOITER ON THE LANDING PAD OR YOU WILL BE CITED.

SPB Arrivals
YOUR BELONGINGS WILL BE DELIVERED TO YOUR DESIGNATED QUARTERS.

MY CONTRACT SAYS I'M ASSIGNED TO SITE SEVENTY

WHERE DO I FIND THAT?

WHAT, I LOOK LIKE AN INFORMATION BOOTH?

I GET PAID TO HELP TRANSPORTS TOUCH DOWN.

GO ASK SOMEBODY WHO CARES.

HEY..

...HEY, BUDDY, YOU *HEAR* ME?

I HEAR YOU JUST FINE

BUT I'M NOT YOUR *BUDDY.*

I JUST GOT OFF A DOUBLE SHIFT, AND YOU'RE STANDING BETWEEN ME AND EIGHT HOURS IN BED.

WANT MORE?

SCOPE OUT *CHIMERA #1* ON SALE DECEMBER 11!

t Pact

Spurred on by a $1,000 wager, Jim Lee makes a triumphant return to monthly comics on 'Batman' with Jeph Loeb

Jim Lee's a man on a mission.

It's Valentine's Day 2002, and the normally reserved superstar penciler and WildStorm president bounds down the hallways of DC Comics' editorial wing like a schoolboy running late for science class. His current mission: to deliver exactly 100 pages of penciled Batman art from a top-secret project he and writer Jeph Loeb have been working on to executive editor Mike Carlin.

Doing his best Kramer impersonation, Lee swings open the door and catapults himself into Carlin's office, which overlooks a bustling Times Square in midtown Manhattan. Without saying a word, he slams the stack of Bristol board down on Carlin's cluttered desk, and after a quick smile directed at the bewildered editor, he utters the two words every gambler aspires to say after placing a big bet on a longshot.

"Pay up!"

Less than six months prior, Lee made a $1,000 wager with some DC editors that he could pencil four issues of a hush-hush Batman project. However, it wasn't the money that got Lee interested in the wager (this is a guy who's no stranger to multi-million dollar business deals). Rather, it was the added incentive that if Lee were to hit his deadline, he and Loeb would be named as the new creative team on *Batman* for 12 issues starting with October's #608.

"I really wanted to do a monthly book again," says Lee. "Throughout the few months leading up to that day, people were steering me towards a graphic novel or a mini-series, but in my mind and my personal definition, being a comic artist is a guy who does monthly comic books."

Yet to get to the heart of Lee's triumphant return to monthly comics (which marks his first regular work since 1999's *Divine Right*), you have to go back to a time when he was too busy to even consider the job, and how a simple visit to a museum sparked one of the biggest comebacks in comic history.

.....By Casey Seijas

THE PLAN

Prior to the now infamous bet, Lee had hit a rut creatively

"One of the reasons why I sold WildStorm to DC was to lighten the business side of what I do so I could focus more on the creative end and pursue my own creative interests," says Lee. "So when I sold the company, I thought I'd have oodles of time, but it didn't quite work out that way. Time moves very quickly I guess, and I've been trying to get to the point where I could do a monthly book again for the past three or four years.'

Despite sporadic runs on books like WildStorm's *Divine Right* and Marvel's "Heroes Reborn" *Fantastic Four*, fans soon began to realize that Lee's days as a comic book penciler were numbered, and despite his never-ending desire to take on monthly projects again, he couldn't help but feel the same way. All of this would soon change after a visit from DC editor Mark Chiarello

'Jeph Loeb was doing *Dark Victory* for me at the time, and he wanted to do a Wonder Woman mini-series after that," explains Chiarello. "So I was at WildStorm one day, and I asked Jim if he had any desire to do that with Jeph. Then Jim said, 'Well, you know I would really love to do a monthly again rather than a mini-series and I kind of put two and two together and said, 'Well, why don't you guys do *Batman*!'"

"Actually, Mark said something to the effect of, 'When are you going to get off your butt and do something?'" laughs Lee. "I said, 'I'm there put me on *Batman* with Jeph.' I'd loved what he had done with *Long Halloween* and *Dark Victory*, and I thought, 'This is a guy who could do a monthly book,' because that's what I really wanted to do

Chiarello soon found himself hopping on a plane to Los Angeles to meet with Loeb to discuss the project.

"Mark and I went to see the Warner Bros. museum on the studio lot," reminisces Loeb. "Somewhere between the Batmobile and Ingrid Bergman's dress, Mark let it slip that Jim Lee was interested in doing a monthly comic for DC using DC heroes. This wasn't going to be some Wildcats crossover; this was the real deal. He'd mentioned the Wonder Woman project, but the one Mark zeroed in on was Batman."

Despite the possibility of teaming up with a superstar penciler like Lee, Loeb still had reservations

"First, I didn't want anything Jim and I did to seem like, or rather be compared to, stuff I did with Tim [Sale]; I didn't want this to be *Long Halloween, Part III*," says Loeb. "Secondly, as most folks know, when I work with someone, it's a partnership. I couldn't just turn in scripts and then have Jim draw them and we would never speak. Some people make comics that way, but that didn't interest me."

Judging by Loeb's past co-plotters Lee might as well get ready for lots of phone calls

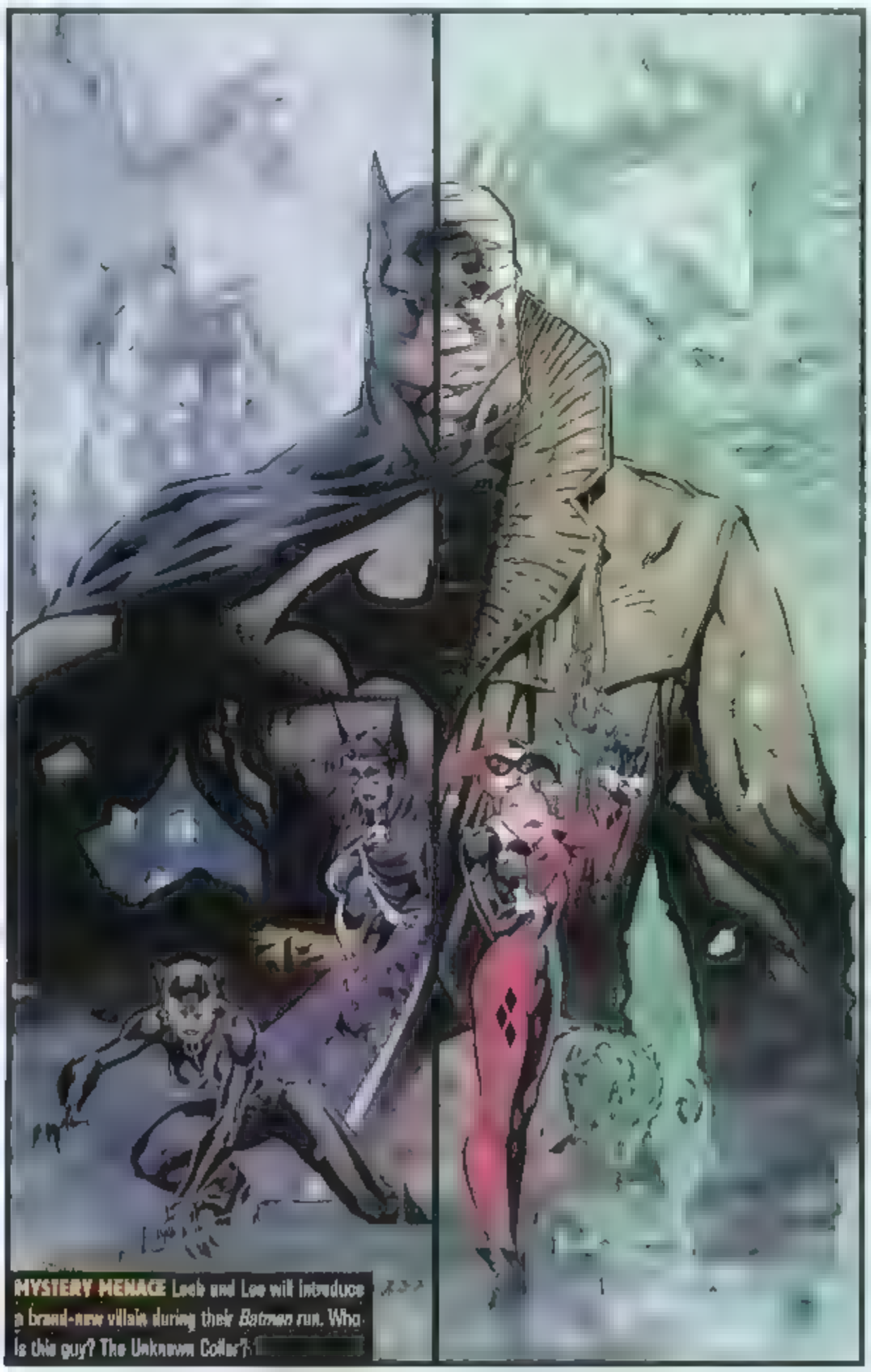
"I have such a good relationship with Jeph," says *Superman* penciler Ed McGuinness. "He'll call every other day but it's cool because we'll just talk about the pages and personal stuff too. He's like my uncle."

Loeb's final concern with teaming up with Lee dealt with title preferences. 'I preferred *Batman* to *Detective Comics*, just as I preferred *Superman* to *Action Comics*. says Loeb

Therein lay the first possible snag. At the time, both *Batman* and *Detective Comics* already had monthly, DC-exclusive writers in Ed Brubaker and Greg Rucka respectively. Not to mention, Lee had his heart set on drawing *Detective*

'In the back of my mind, I was being ultra-protective of Rucka," divulges Loeb. "Not only is he a friend, I think he's one of the best writers out there, and I love what he was doing on the book.'

Yet both creators knew that none of these grand schemes would amount to anything if they couldn't make deadlines. Lee hadn't worked on a monthly series since *Divine Right* ended in early 2001



MYSTERY MENACE Loeb and Lee will introduce a brand-new villain during their *Batman* run. Who is this guy? The Unknown Collar?

(which shipped sporadically at best), while Loeb already had his hands full writing *Superman*, *Daredevil: Yellow* and *Spider-Man: Blue* in addition to working full-time on Warner Bros.' "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" cartoon. However, Lee remained adamant that it had to be a monthly gig.

"I knew that I hadn't been able to do [monthly books] for a while," explains Lee. "This is a big deal, and no one wants to lay it on the line and have it come up short. So the fact that there was a lot of attention on this, I think it really spurred me on to get the stuff done."

While Loeb and Lee were all systems go, DC editors weren't as convinced the two could pull off a monthly title. At the same time, DC wasn't about to turn its back on what could be a groundbreaking run on the series. With that in mind, they decided to prey on Lee's competitive nature by placing a wager on the project.

It was put-up or pay-up time.

THE BET

In October of 2001, Lee made a business trip to the DC offices to discuss upcoming WildStorm projects and try and push the Batman proposal. He'd already begun working on the project—sketching characters and plotting out pages—but it wasn't until DC upped the ante that the project became a priority.

"Jim called a few days later and said that he'd made a $1,000 bet with a few DC editors that he could get four issues done by Valentine's Day," says Loeb. "Jim just wanted to know that I would be there for him throughout this, and I kidded him that I wanted half the money if we won."

More importantly, what was at stake was a chance to be the new creative team on *Batman*, or see their proposal relegated to a maxi-series.

"Once I got an issue or two going, DC started to take the proposal seriously but I don't think they wanted to fully commit," explains Lee. "So I said, 'Look, if I can finish four issues in six months, can we go ahead and make this official?' That was the bargain."

Surprisingly, it wasn't Lee that DC was worried about.

"Jim let it slip that the DC guys weren't concerned about Jim—they were worried about me!" says Loeb. "I'm not sure if DC was really worried. I've never been late for any show—but Jim knew how to work me. I just got pissed off and told him to screw the money. I wasn't going to be the one who blew the bet."

With the stakes set high, Loeb and Lee began the marathon process of putting together four solid issues of *Batman*. The two worked diligently, almost to the point where they became reclusive.

"I had to sit down with my wife and tell her, 'This is what I really want to do, and this is a personal goal for me,'" remembers Lee. "I explained that it might take away a lot of family time, including evenings and weekends, which has proven to be true. But the work had to be done, and she knows that there's an ultimate light at the end of the tunnel, and that this is very important to me."

Regardless of the intense workload Loeb and Lee voluntarily accepted, one simple fact remained. Even if the two hit the deadline, they'd only walk away with $1,000 since at the time neither *Detective* or *Batman* was available. All that would change as 2001 came to a close and DC announced Rucka would be leaving *Detective*.

"It meant at least one of the monthly books was going to open up," says Loeb, "[Batman Group Editor] Bob Schreck called with this idea that Brubaker could move to *Detective* since the book had a certain flavor that involved the Gotham City cast, which wasn't where Jim and I were headed with our proposal. *Batman* finally seemed like an obtainable goal."

With everything in position, the two creators kicked into high gear, working 'round the clock in hopes of proving the skeptics wrong.

"I was spurring Jim on and he was asking for more script," remembers Loeb. "It was insane; pages were coming through the fax almost as fast as I could write them. We had a very strong outline, and Schreck knew how to keep us on the right track, but we were still going to be cutting it very, very close."

SCALES OF JUSTICE Lee's redesigned Killer Croc will make life especially hard for the Caped Crusader.

When Valentine's Day 2002 finally rolled around, Lee made a special visit to DC with 100 pages (one more than he actually needed) of *Batman* #608 through #610 ready for editing.

Ka-ching

"No offense to any other pencilers out there, but c'mon, this is Jim-freakin'-Lee we're talking about here! No one can touch him when he draws women, and I just had to see his rendition of Poison Ivy!"

–JEPH LOEB, new 'Batman' writer

THE PAYOFF

With six issues finished and the seventh issue close to completion, Lee has officially dropped the "slow penciler" reputation and not only surprised his skeptics, but himself as well.

"I've never been this far ahead on any book I've ever done in comics," exclaims Lee. "When the first issue comes out, I'm going to hate it because it's been such a long time since it's been finished. I'm sure the way I draw Batman is going to be different by the eighth issue than what it was in the first issue."

The first issue of Loeb and Lee's run hits stands this month with *Batman* #608 as a year-long storyarc titled "Hush." Loeb hints that the arc will follow a similar format to Kevin Smith's "Quiver" arc from *Green Arrow*, in that the 12-ish run will contain several mini-arcs throughout. While neither creator wants to give away too much about the script, fans can expect plenty of Batman's rogues gallery to show up—especially the roguettes.

"No offense to any other pencilers out there, but c'mon, this is Jim-freakin'-Lee we're talking about here!" laughs Loeb. "No one can touch him when he draws women, and I just had to see his rendition of Poison Ivy!"

There's even a new, highly confidential villain in the works to give the Dark Knight detective a new set of headaches. However one Batman villain who fans have been demanding to see the Caped Crusader square off against will return to prominence at the halfway point in the series—the Joker.

"The question of, 'Why doesn't Batman just kill him already?' will definitely be answered by issue #7," hints Lee.

And Batman will have to face these new threats with only Catwoman as his back-up.

"It will be a small cast," says Loeb. "That comes from working with the Superman office. I like keeping it very close to the lead character so everything works off of him."

However, the major premise of "Hush" has to do with Batman's endurance. According to Loeb, not only will Bats have to deal with a wide variety of villains both new and old but moreso, when will Bruce Wayne finally say, "Enough is enough," realizing that the vow made on his parents' grave to rid Gotham of crime has finally been fulfilled?

"We're hoping to tell a story that, if you've been following current Batman continuity, you're on board, but if you haven't been reading *Batman* in a while—or ever, for that matter—you can hop on right here," explains Loeb. While it may be obvious that Loeb and Lee hope to have a successful run on *Batman*, they're both having too much fun with the series to even worry about being remembered for it in the years to come.

"Words can't describe how exciting this is for me," says Lee. "I've grown to miss the feeling of working under pressure and hitting a deadline. That's where I want to get to again, drawing 23 pages a month and hitting my deadlines."

"What do I want Batman fans to remember about me and Jim's run on the series?" asks Loeb. "Hopefully it's that we told good stories with compelling images. I don't think we can ask for anything more than that."

BAT-BEAUTIES With lovely-yet-lethal ladies like Poison Ivy and Catwoman clawing for his affections, how can Batman keep his mind on crimefighting?

COMICS

CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF OZZY, TONY SOPRANO AND 'THE MATRIX'? WE HIRE THE ULTIMATE DREAM TEAMS TO CREATE THE HOTTEST TV AND MOVIES AS COMIC BOOKS.

WE

WE KNOW HOW YOU FEEL.

Thirteen episodes just isn't enough of Tony Soprano and those outrageous Osbournes. Three movies just doesn't cut it for Neo and the "Matrix" militia. And the Harry Potter books just don't come out fast enough.

Thank god for comics. Comics has a long history of picking up the ball between movies, episodes and novel releases from Dark Horse's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* lines, DC's *Smallville* series and Image's upcoming *Snake Plissken* series (starring the hero of "Escape from New York"). But not every hot property has hit comics. Yet. Thankfully, the secret recipe for success starts with the big picture.

"It starts with a visual property," says Ron Marz, who has written a myriad of licensed comics from *Star Wars* to *Batman vs. Aliens*. "Stick with what works. Though you need to meet and hopefully exceed people's expectations, because they will bring a lot of it to the table for something like this."

Don't we know it. That's why *Wizard* has recruited top-notch talent, Marz included, to bring Hollywood's coolest characters to the printed page. Please enjoy the next six pages, as we're sure they're comics *you'll* wanna see, too.

Last of the Pitts, New Line Cinema, Anthony Lapetino, courtesy of MTV, The Sopranos, HBO, Anthony Neeley

THE SOPRANOS

WRITER: Alan Moore

ARTIST: John Cassaday (art shown below)

PREMISE: Tony Soprano's TV Mob life proves almost as real as anyone's. Sure, there's the gritty, street-level sense of mafia justice. But the charm of "Sopranos" comes from Tony's daily trial to balance his real family with the other, more violent one. He's a Mob lord who's so stressed by his "day job" that he sees a shrink, worries that his son might wind up like him and tries to take care of his cancer-ridden uncle. It's TV at its best—and we wouldn't change a thing for the comic.

WHY MOORE: Moore's not only a living legend, he's proven to be one of comics' most versatile writers—perfect for adapting a TV show that combines intense drama with laugh-out-loud moments. Sure, the guy wrote *Watchmen*, but check out the range in *Top 10* where jokes and tension run hand in hand. Moore's also a huge fan of HBO's mobster series. "It's the best thing that's come out of American television that I can remember," says Moore. "The episodes, for the most part, are incredibly well directed, well written, very well researched and has wonderful characterization. Over these three seasons the standard has been maintained wonderfully. It's a remarkable show."

WHY CASSADAY: Whether he's illustrating the conspiracy-laden *Planetary* or terrorist-smashing *Captain America*, Cassaday draws great grit. Nobody's perfect in this artist's world, as evidenced by the tons of tiny ink specks spackled all over his art—perfect for the New Jersey underworld inhabited by Tony and da boys. "The characters are so well developed and all seem to have a dark side," says Cassaday. "Most are living more than one life and pretending one doesn't exist while in the other. But you can see it in their face. There's a constant nervous trust among the main players. That tension is as much a challenge for an illustrator as it is for an actor. That's what attracts me to the show."

WILL IT HAPPEN? DC Comics, a sister subsidiary of HBO under the AOL Time-Warner umbrella, is a natural place for a Sopranos comic. But alas, the publisher won't say if it plans to launch one. Either way, it won't happen with Moore, who has vowed never to work at DC due to profit-sharing

THE MATRIX

WRITERS: The Wachowski Bros.

ARTIST: Steve Skroce (art shown above)

PREMISE: Get this: The world we inhabit isn't real. In reality, humanity is plugged into computers and harvested for soulless machines who rule the world. The virtual reality world of the Matrix is so huge, there's no limit to the comic stories that could be told

WHY THE WACHOWSKIS: Well, they only created the whole shebang. But what many don't know is that "Matrix" writers/directors Larry and Andy Wachowski actually got their start writing the Marvel series *Ektokid*. The press-shy siblings probably wouldn't mind collaborating again with an artist named Skroce

WHY SKROCE: He began his comic career with the Wachowskis on *Ektokid*. And he's stuck with 'em ever since, most prominently as the storyboard artist for all three "Matrix" flicks. "For a couple of months [during preproduction for "The Matrix"], we were essentially drawing the movie into a giant comic book," says Skroce in *The Art of the Matrix* book, a behind-the-scenes look at the making of the first film. "When that was finished, [Larry and Andy] showed it to the heads of Warner Bros.—a comic book they could go through, showing exactly what the movie was about."

WILL IT HAPPEN? Online-exclusive comics have been created, but so far, no series in print has been produced. More online comics may follow suit, but word is mum on a printed version

THE OSBOURNES

WRITER: Keith Giffen

ARTIST: Jim Mahfood (art shown above)

PREMISE: Based on the hottest reality TV show going, MTV's "The Osbournes" follows rock star Ozzy Osbourne and his oddly uproarious family. Where else on television could you watch people who seek out a pet psychiatrist, hide handguns in fruit bowls and throw a giant ham at noisy neighbors? In comics, there's no limit on the absurdity...so why not?

WHY GIFFEN: This is the guy who made high-art outta carnage with his original Lobo mini-series. Wait'll he gets ahold of his current favorite dysfunctional family. "I'm a big fan of other people's public humiliations and the occasional train wreck," says Giffen. "I'd write it, if only for the challenge of fictionalizing a show that's supposed to be reality based. How warped would that be? As for a writing style, I'd go for irreverence all the way, mostly because irreverence is the state I find the most comfort in."

WHY MAHFOOD: He's already cemented the looks of Kevin Smith's Jay and Silent Bob in the comics. Why not add another crazy celebrity crew to his resume? "Ozzy's got that f---ed-up posture and sinister smile—he's already a cartoon character," says Mahfood. "They're all cartoon characters already and I wouldn't have to exaggerate them that much. It would be funny if [this comic] were like flashbacks throughout Ozzy's career. I'd love to do trip sequences of what Ozzy sees when he's f---ed up."

WILL IT HAPPEN? With the high-ticket price the wizards of Oz have reportedly been asking for, industry insiders say one publisher has already negotiated to do a comic, but deemed it too costly

HARRY POTTER

Chuck Dixon

Humberto Ramos

Meet Harry Potter, the world's most powerful sorcerer who still has to grow up and learn how to do it. In his four years at the exclusive Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry, Harry's had quite the adventures fighting the minions of the evil Lord Voldemort. But have readers of author J.K. Rowlings' mega-hit novel series really seen *everything*? Perhaps there have been some never-told side adventures that can be made into a comic book.

Simply put, this guy writes teens better than anyone. While Dixon admits he hasn't read the Potter novels, he has the tools to work his own magic on the franchise if he did. With over 100 issues of DC's *Robin* series and mini-series, he's simply mastered the art of teen angst. "Adolescence has got to be the worst part of your life," Dixon laughs. "Trying to make it through to the other side with a decent image of yourself is tough. I think that's everybody. Everybody's evolving."

Simply put, this guy draws teens better than anyone. Check out Ramos' unbelievable artwork on his two Cliffhanger series *Out There* and *Crimson*— this is an artist who knows that teens come in all shapes in sizes, perfect for the imperfect world of nerdy sorcerers-in-training Harry, Ron and Hermione. A huge Potter fan already, Ramos would love to put on his black wizard robe and draw Harry and Co. "I love [the game] of Quidditch and the invisible cloak," he says. "Growing up, I was pretty much a lonely kid like Harry, and I have a golden heart. Well, at least that's what my mom says!"

One would think that since AOL Time-Warner owns the mass-market rights to Harry, its subsidiary DC Comics would produce a comic. Unfortunately, the publisher has no plans to bring Harry to four-color life.

LORD OF THE RINGS

WRITER: Ron Marz

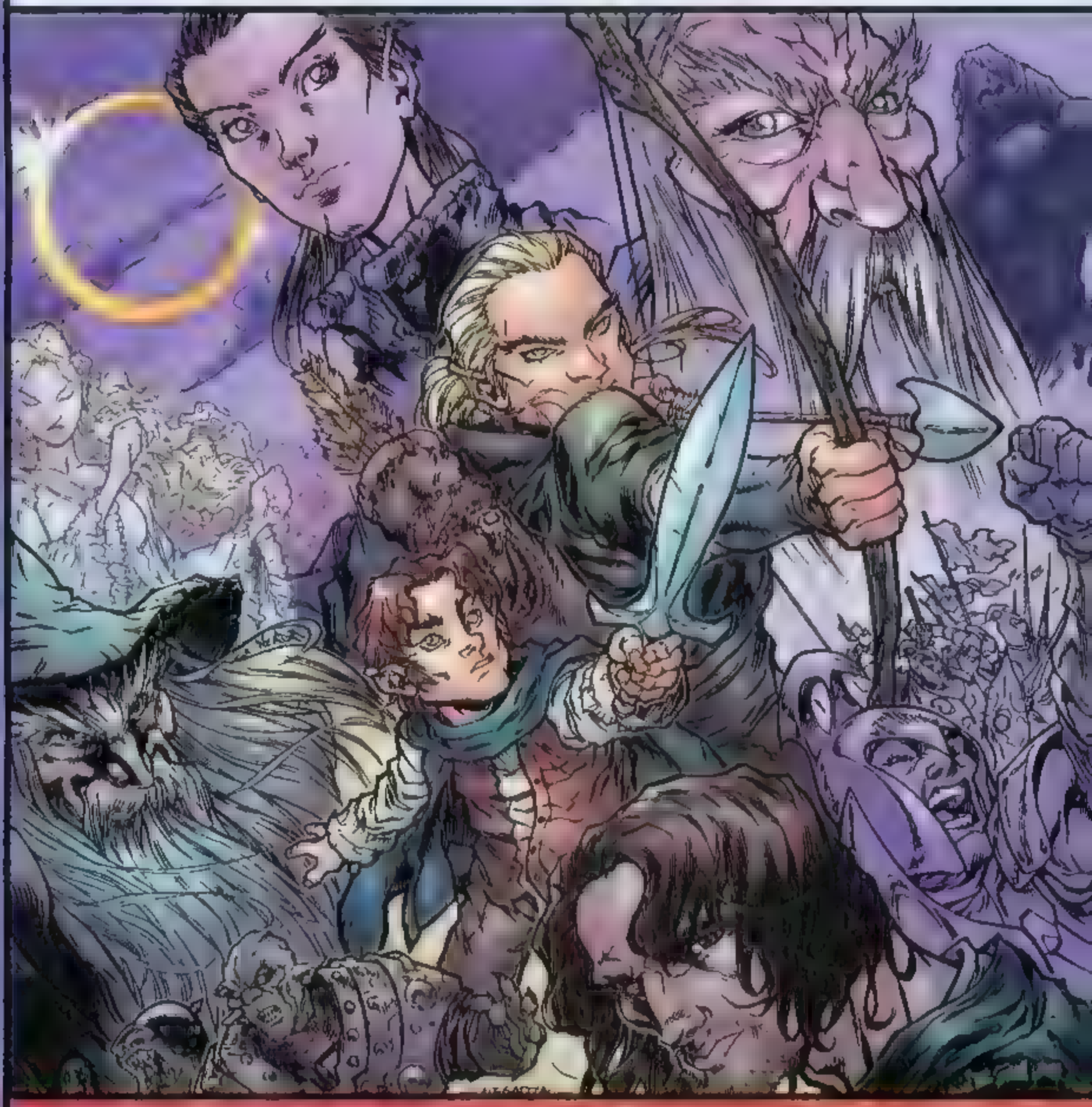
ARTIST: Alé Garza (art shown below)

PREMISE: In the land of Middle Earth, there's always some evil sumbitch who needs some ass-whoopin'. In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, it's the mighty Sauron, who could only be toppled by destroying his unholy rings—which is what our heroes Frodo, Gandalf, Aragorn and Co. set out to do. In our comic series, we'd tell the myriad of other unseen tales of Middle Earth from various times in its long history—how Sauron came to power, how the rings came to be, how elves devolved into orcs...a comic series to truly mine the depths of Tolkien's genius.

WHY MARZ: He excels at the fantasy genre, as anyone could see in CrossGen's *Sojourn* and *Scion*. Marz isn't shy about borrowing *Rings*' themes either. Sojourn's Arwyn seeks the five fragments of Ayden's bow which can destroy the all-powerful dictator Mordath—a nod to *Rings*' star Frodo and his quest to destroy the ruling ring which would dethrone the tyrannical Sauron. Even *Scion*'s Prince Ethan's rite of passage to manhood can be compared to that of Frodo's. "*The Lord of the Rings* is the source from which all other fantasy springs," says Marz. "Tolkien's work is the trunk of the tree, everything else is just a branch. It's not an accident it was named 'Book of the Century.'"

WHY GARZA: His Cliffhanger series *Ninja Boy* had a cool, kitschy fantasy element to its look, which made the medieval setting look...well, new. "It has so many cool elements that can be translated into comic form," says Garza, who hasn't read the books, but gushes over the films. "You have your sword-wielding heroes, magical sorcerers, evil monsters and beautiful female characters—what more could you ask? The story I did in *Ninja Boy* kinda wet my chops for a project like this."

WILL IT HAPPEN? With the second of three "Rings" movies due out in December, the clock is ticking on any comic launch. So far, no major or indie publisher has bitten, most likely due to the high licensing costs requested by Tolkien's estate.



WIZARD TEAM-UP:

BRITNEY AND EMINEM

WRITER: Scott Lobdell

ARTIST: J. Scott Campbell (art shown above)

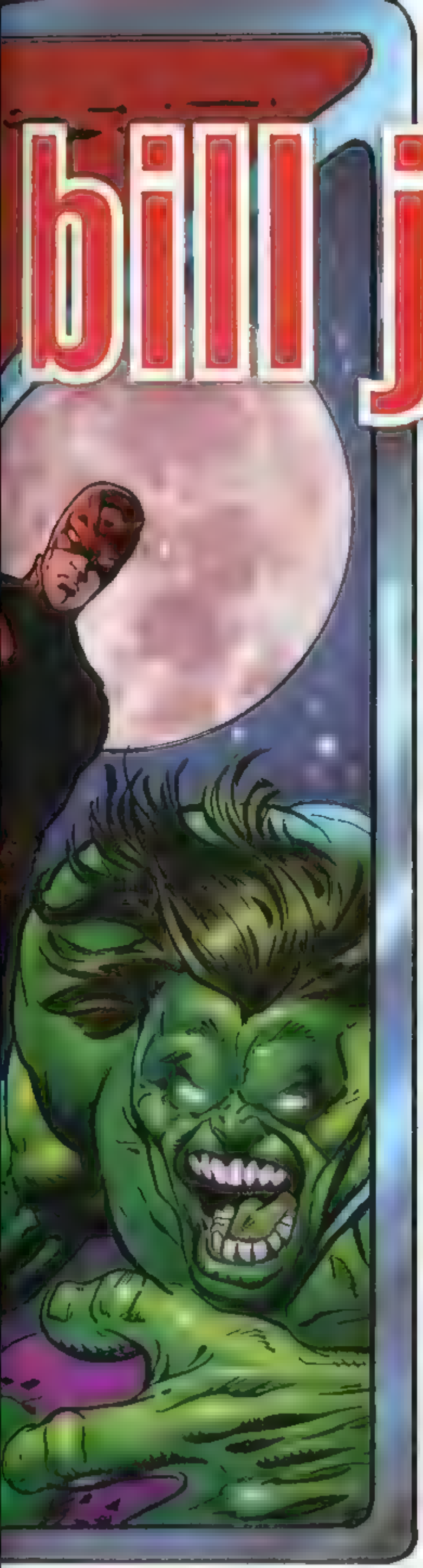
PREMISE: Every month, *Wizard* would team up unlikely superstars. Coke could take the Pepsi Challenge, IBM might take a bite outta Apple...and yep, even a white rapper could answer the age-old question about pop's saccharine superbabe: "Are they real?"

WHY LOBDELL: Ever read his Cliffhanger series *High Roads*? Lobdell knows a good farce when he sees one. And if he can mix a midget Hitler lookalike, a cowardly kamikaze pilot and a bumbling cornfed G.I....he can find a way to team up Britney and Eminem. Says Lobdell: "On one hand you have a sweet, young girl trying hard to balance between the Madonna/whore image, and on the other you have a tough, young thug telling us how misunderstood he is at the same time showing us he doesn't care how misunderstood he is–he just wants to be understood that he doesn't care about being misunderstood...the comedy writes itself! Who *wouldn't* want that gig?"

WHY CAMPBELL: C'mon, just take a gander at his rendition of Britney one more time. "I'm a pretty big fan of Britney, though Eminem I can either take or leave," says Campbell. "I'm not so much a fan of Britney's music as I am of just the whole package—she's very cute. If liking Britney is geeky, than let me never be cool! I suppose the real challenges of drawing these two are just having them come across as real and as natural as possible. And to just have fun with it."

WILL IT HAPPEN? Umm... probably not. Since Slim Shady slams Señorita Spears every chance he gets, we highly doubt Britney would become a slave 4 M

bill jemas



Armed with questions from fans, we sit down with Marvel's controversial president to find out why he loves to stir up trouble

Like the ex-boyfriend who just can't let go, Bill Jemas is akin to a relentless stalker.

Sometimes after work, sometimes before, sometimes even during office hours, the co-creator of the Ultimate line and the man responsible for making sure Wolverine's origin was told trolls the online message boards. The President of Marvel Comics searches for talk of his company, personal attacks on himself or his employees or just for anyone willing to listen.

Jemas doesn't want to just annoy fans—he wants to enrage them, irritate them and harass them. More than that, he wants to make fans think differently about comics.

"For the past two years, Marvel has done a George Costanza," says Jemas, referring to the common sense-lacking "Seinfeld" character. "We've done the opposite of 'generally accepted industry thinking' as expressed by a handful of knuckleheads."

Collecting questions from fans, *Wizard* decided to give Joe Fanboy a chance to irritate, harass and annoy Jemas right back.

The Harvard Law School grad, who turned Fleer's sagging trading card market back into a powerhouse of profit, is known as much for helping save companies as he is for his loud mouth and inflammatory statements. Since becoming president of Marvel's floundering publishing division in 2000, Jemas has referred to his biggest competition, DC Comics, as AOLComics (a dig at DC's parent company AOL/Time Warner). He's openly challenged the writing skills of *Captain Marvel*'s Peter David and has been a constant on Internet message boards, telling numerous fans just what they can do with their complaints on how he runs the House of Ideas.

But while Jemas has his detractors, no one can deny he's been good for Marvel Comics. Sales of Marvel titles are up, the company has huge Hollywood hits such as "X-Men" and "Spider-Man" under its belt with still more movies such as "Daredevil" and "Hulk" on the way. Oh, and Marvel Entertainment's first-quarter trade paperback revenue for 2002 increased by 240 percent from last year.

So with an extra $30 million in Marvel's pocket, does Marvel Comics still need a president that many feel is a jerk? Well, if you ask Jemas, then no. But then again—he won't admit it ever had one.

By Mike Cotton • Illustration by Jan Duursema

AMAZING FOR THE MASSES: Jemas made certain that both the "Spider-Man" movie and Ultimate Spidey were mass audience-friendly.

vital stats

NAME: Bill Jemas
BORN: 1958
EDUCATION: Graduated from Rutgers College and Harvard Law School
OCCUPATION: President of Marvel Comics
BASE OF OPERATION: The House of Ideas, New York, NY
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Vice President Business Development and Business Affairs for the National Basketball Association, Executive Vice President for MSG Sports, President of Fleer Corp, now President of Publishing & New Media for Marvel Comics.
QUOTABLE: "Comic book readers are broken up into two classic cases: People who are so earnest that they are hilarious and they don't know it, and a few people who are just so freaking smart that it's fun to have an intelligent discourse about creative and business policies with them. I have a great time finding out who's whom."

Do you care that most fans think you're a jerk? –Craig Cornell, Austin, Texas

JEMAS: Only the jerky ones think I'm a jerk. I say things that my friends and I think are funny. Get it? Harvard lawyer goes to comic book company—hijinks to follow.

There are a couple of hundred self-important people who don't like the banter and get their shorts all in a bunch. I am genuinely sorry about hurting their feelings, and while I'm apologizing anyway, let me apologize in advance for the rest of this interview.

What was the first comic you read? –Anthony Keligond, Pensacola, Fla.

I made a good faith attempt to read comic books when I was a kid and didn't like them. I just couldn't get into them. I couldn't understand them. I didn't want to take the time to read the pile of comics it would take me to understand the next issue. When I started running Marvel's entertainment card business in 1993, I read every Marvel comic book that came out every week for three years. It took six months before I could understand them and enjoy reading them—six months! I'm a Harvard Law School graduate and it took six months! Today, you can buy the *Ultimate Spider-Man* trade paperback and you're hooked—first page! As a tax attorney, I had breezed through the Internal Revenue Code, but the X-Men by Fabian [Nicieza], Chris [Claremont], Scott [Lobdell] and the boys had me stumped.

Why do you always approach comics (other than Marvel) with such great negativity? Isn't growth of the industry, no matter the source, good for everyone? –Michael Wilkins, Wilmington, Va.

Well, that's a really negative question. There are about a dozen good non-Marvel comics published every week. And you can always tell the ones that Joe [Quesada, Marvel Editor-in-Chief] and I like because we will hire that talent to come play in the Marvel sandbox. Our challenge for the first couple of years was to convince people who ran out of Marvel screaming that it's safe to come back, and I think we did a good job of that. Now we want to get creators who don't work in comics here. We want new writers and new artists. There are dozens of great comics in the market. What people don't like is when I point out that bad books are bad. But I could be quiet as a mouse and all those books that suck will still suck. And listen, the first step in remaking Marvel was admitting that most of our monthly books were not worth reading.

How has the formation of CrossGen impacted Marvel and the industry? Give me both good and bad ways. –Laura Yu, Tallahassee, Fla.

They don't show up in anyone's sales charts. To have an impact—negative or positive—I'd have to know they were there. I wish them a lot of luck, but right now they are not on the radar screen, because their books don't sell.

Would you ever consider the Ultimate Universe becoming the main Marvel U and slowly ending long-running series? –Ed Silva, Brick, N.J.

I've considered it but wouldn't do it. One of the cornerstones of the new Marvel is understanding all of the different fan groups and target audiences and publishing a variety of books that give all of them what they want. "Ultimatizing" the entire Marvel Universe

would be inconsistent with that strategy, because it would fail to serve "traditionalists"

Are you expanding the Ultimate line? What's next? –Jeff Moses, Atlanta, Ga.
We will endeavor to keep the Ultimate line at four [titles] per month. It may zip up to five. It may slip down to three. But we're going to try to keep it to four. *Ultimate Spider-Man*, *Ultimate X-Men* and *The Ultimates* will remain players. Then there are serious limited series such as *Ultimate Adventures* and *Ultimate Daredevil & Elektra* [see story on page 28] Beyond that, you'll see Ultimate projects spring up as TV and movie projects continue to come out.

Why do comics cost so damn much? –Candace Walsh, New York, N.Y.
The prices are relatively high because the units are relatively low. Marvel has been able to hold the price on our best sellers to $2.25 because they have the best sales volume. Most comics that people want to read cost $2.25. The comic books that cost a lot are priced to be profitable while selling fewer copies. If the total volume selling increased across the board, I'd be the first to consider a price rollback. I think $2.25 is a fair price.

Why'd you pick Joe Q as Marvel's new EIC? Who were your other choices? –Patrick Trauma, Toms River, N.J.
Marvel Knights was making the best comic books in the business—the best looking, the best written. They were reader-friendly and commercially viable. There was no second choice; if Joe didn't accept the job, I would have done something stupid like having no editor-in-chief or having an office of the editor-in-chief, cobbled together some committee or something. It would have been bad.

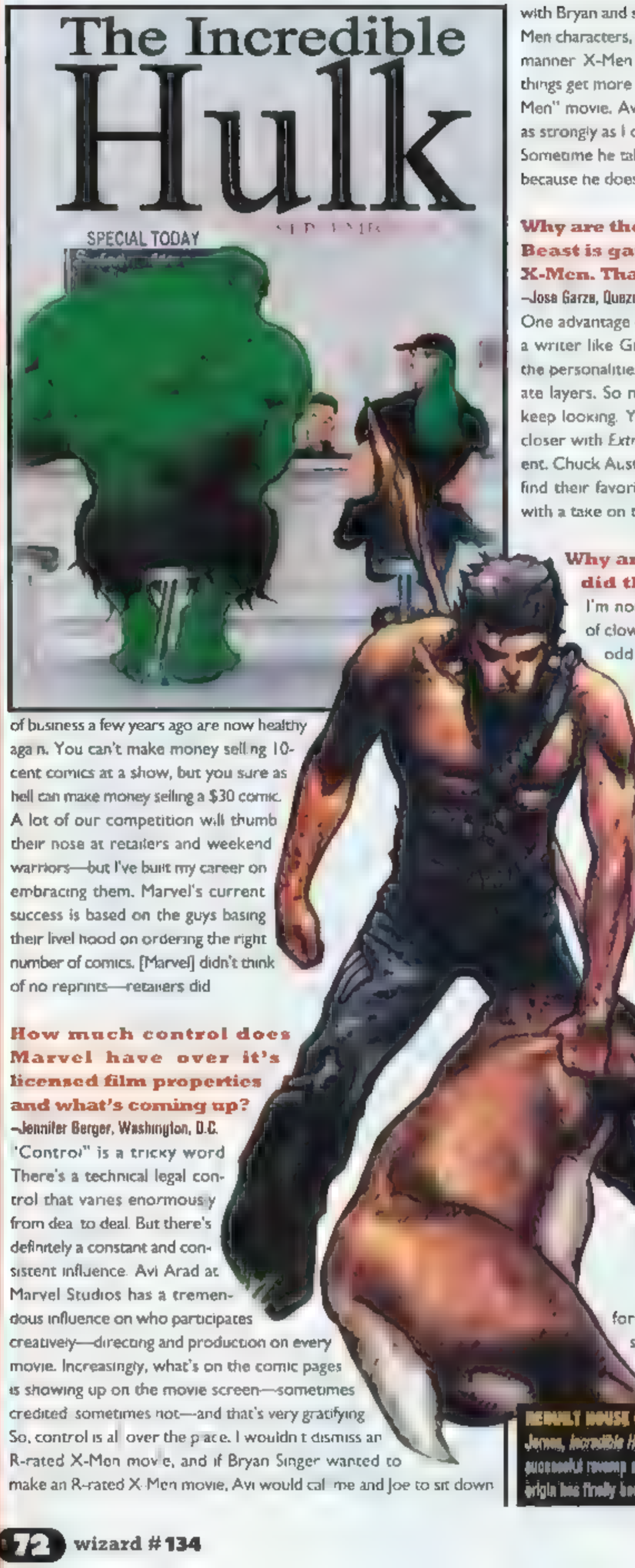
My little brother (he's 11) loves comic books. But your comics seem geared towards an older audience. When will you gear your books to the younger crowd again? –Steven Benson, Monterey, Calif.
It's a struggle because the comic books that are purely geared towards younger readers just don't sell. The only exception we have is *Ultimate Spider-Man*, and that's because of Brian Bendis. He's a unique talent that can hit all ages. What you'll see us do over the next year is produce sequential storytelling content for 8-to-11-year-olds. Some will appear as comics in their first instance. But a lot of this will not be printed in comic book format. Younger kids don't stumble into comic book stores anymore. They stumble into bookstores. So if you want to get large sales numbers, we need to be in the 8x8 format and the trim size for older kids.

If you could undo anything you've done since taking over Marvel, what would it be? –Daniel Murphy, Tuscaloosa, Ala.
I don't think I'd undo anything. I just don't think in those terms. But I do think that, going forward, it's clear the industry is too divisive. People clearly take themselves way too seriously in this business. So one of things that we're going to try to do is laugh at ourselves a little bit more and maybe let the tongue show in our cheek more than we have in the past. But that doesn't mean I would undo any of the rhetoric. People needed a cold bucket of water. We had an industry that was very, very happy to lose 10 percent of the readership every year. Gentle persuasion was not effective when dealing with zealots. The zealots needed a bucket of cold ice water down their backs. Now is the time to towel off and get back to work.

I think a big part of comics' success today is based on Marvel's no-overprint policy. Hundreds of people who were about to go out

"As a tax attorney, I had breezed through the Internal Revenue Code, but the X-Men [in 1993] had me stumped."
–BILL JEMAS, President, Marvel Entertainment

X-STATUS QUO By freeing new X-writers from continuity constraints, Jemas has helped establish easier-to-follow X-books.



of business a few years ago are now healthy again. You can't make money selling 10-cent comics at a show, but you sure as hell can make money selling a $30 comic. A lot of our competition will thumb their nose at retailers and weekend warriors—but I've built my career on embracing them. Marvel's current success is based on the guys basing their livelihood on ordering the right number of comics. [Marvel] didn't think of no reprints—retailers did

How much control does Marvel have over it's licensed film properties and what's coming up? –Jennifer Berger, Washington, D.C.

"Control" is a tricky word. There's a technical legal control that varies enormously from deal to deal. But there's definitely a constant and consistent influence. Avi Arad at Marvel Studios has a tremendous influence on who participates creatively—directing and production on every movie. Increasingly, what's on the comic pages is showing up on the movie screen—sometimes credited, sometimes not—and that's very gratifying. So, control is all over the place. I wouldn't dismiss an R-rated X-Men movie, and if Bryan Singer wanted to make an R-rated X-Men movie, Avi would call me and Joe to sit down with Bryan and see if that was the right way to go. With the right X-Men characters, the best way to portray them would be in an R-rated manner. X-Men has some very adult themes introduced early on. As things get more extreme in tone, I can see a really good R-rated "X-Men" movie. Avi runs that show. If I have an opinion, I'll express it as strongly as I do any of my other opinions. And Avi always listens. Sometime he takes my advice, sometimes he doesn't. He's effective because he doesn't try to smother the dialogue.

Why are the X-Men so poorly done these days? Beast is gay! Prof. X uses a gun! That's not my X-Men. That's Marvel's version of The Authority. –Josa Garza, Quezon City, Philippines

One advantage of having multiple X-Men titles is that you can give a writer like Grant Morrison the freedom to explore aspects of the personalities of the characters that he's writing about and create layers. So no, you can't find your X-Men in *New X-Men*, but keep looking. You'll get closer with *Ultimate X-Men*, or you'll get closer with *Extreme X-Men*. Grant's X-Men are "New" and different. Chuck Austen's are "Uncanny" and traditional. Any reader can find their favorite X-Men every month just by finding the writer with a take on the characters that they like.

Why are clowns so damn scary and when did this happen? –Sam Williams, Chattanooga, Tenn.

I'm not scared of clowns. I do know people are scared of clowns. Why are people scared of clowns? That seems odd to me.

Is it hard to keep surprising Marvel fans? When redefining characters, are you ever worried that you are turning your backs on the characters' roots? –Rod Banus, Jacksonville, Fla.

With a couple of minor exceptions, our characters have feet, not roots. The real difficulty comes from trying to carry the 40-year history of the character into each story. Look at the *Elektra/Wolverine: Redeemer* illustrated novel. Greg Rucka is an accomplished prose novelist and Yoshitaka Amano is a world-famous painter. Greg wrote a great story with Elektra the assassin pitted against Wolverine the bodyguard. The story worked best with Elektra and Wolverine starting as total strangers. But 10 years ago somebody wrote a story in which they met. We could have asked Greg to try to explain away the earlier meeting (and screw up the flow of his narrative) but we chose to let him write the best story he could.

The formula for failure at Marvel is forcing creators to fit the next page of every new story in between the cracks of the past 40 years of old stories.

NEWLY HOUSE OF IDEAS Under Jemas, *Incredible Hulk* has enjoyed a successful revamp and Wolverine's origin has finally been told.

By the Wizard Staff

In a sizzling year for Spider-Man, WIZARD sizes up all four Spidey series to find out which one truly deserves to be the 'ultimate' title

te -Man?

The Chinese calendar may say that 2002's the year of the Horse, but here in the States, it's definitely been the year of the Spider.

After years of mediocre sales and little to no excitement surrounding the core titles, Spider-Man has once again emerged as the marquee character of the comics industry. Collectors pine after back issues of the core titles, the industry's top talents like Kevin Smith and J. Michael Straczynski flock to Marvel for a chance to write or draw the ol' webhead, and thanks to a multi-million dollar summer blockbuster, new readers are beginning to discover what many Spidey fans have known all along—Spider-Man is hands down the coolest character in comics.

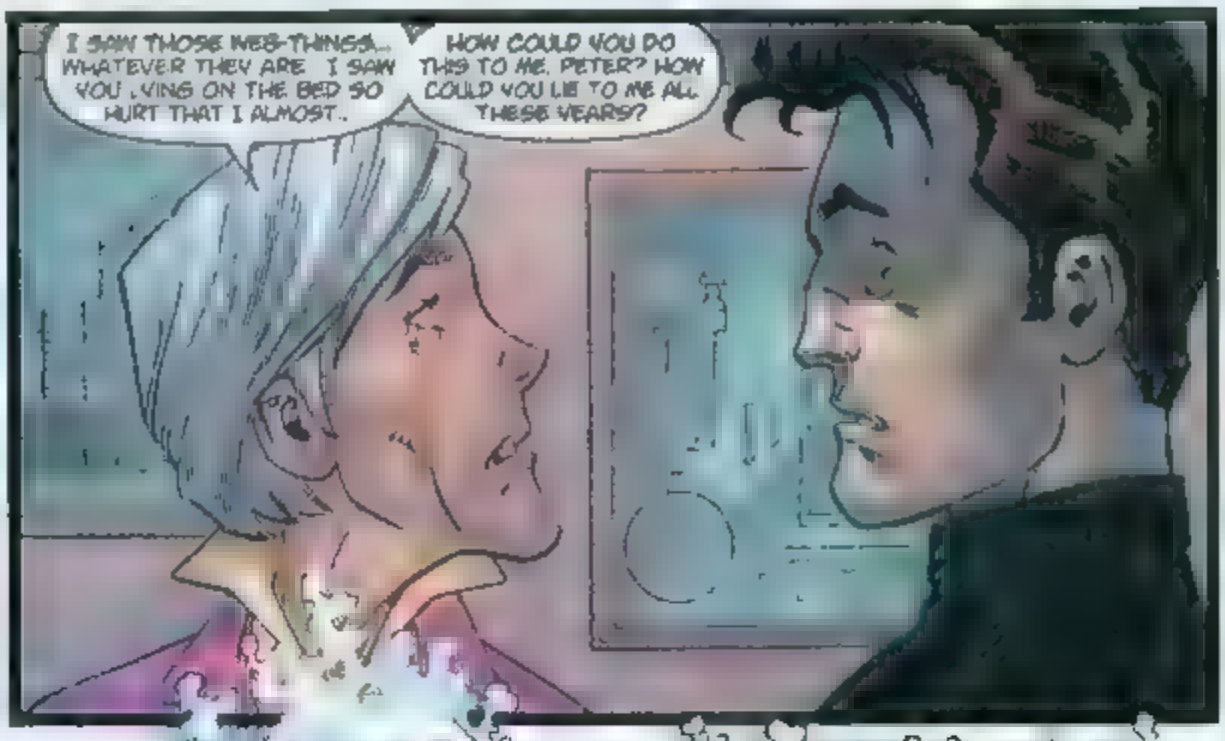
"It all boils down to the talent attached to each book and the approach from each individual creator," explains Spider-Man Editor Axel Alonso on the turn-around of the Spidey books as of late. "You have writers who have very clear visions of what they want to do with the books, and artists who are top-notch. Also, since all the books act as separate entities, the creators are allowed independence which benefits all four books because creators have the breathing room to plan what they really want to do."

Thanks to the seemingly endless hype surrounding the character over the past two years, Marvel has stepped up to the plate by expanding the Spider-Man line from two core titles to four, and each book has something for everyone. However, which of the four—*Amazing Spider-Man*, *Peter Parker: Spider-Man*, *Ultimate Spider-Man* and *Spider-Man's Tangled Web*—reigns supreme? *Wizard* takes the initiative and grades each of the titles, letting you know which books are must-reads and which books to borrow from your friends

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

CREATIVE TEAM: Writer J. Michael Straczynski, penciler John Romita Jr. and inker Scott Hanna

THE WEB-LINE: Straczynski's recipe for Spider-Man success isn't just amazing—it's classic. Not only did JMS clean up this iconic character's past decade of calamitous continuity (Spider-clone, anyone?), but also faced the challenge to keep the 40-year-old character fresh. By pumping up Peter Parker's support system—specifically Aunt May—and by introducing new Spider-foes, Straczynski and Romita Jr. have given us a Spidey where "classic" means heaping on the surprises like Lee and Ditko once did.


I SAW THOSE WEB-THINGS... WHATEVER THEY ARE. I SAW YOU LYING ON THE BED SO HURT THAT I ALMOST..
HOW COULD YOU DO THIS TO ME, PETER? HOW COULD YOU LIE TO ME ALL THESE YEARS?

SPIDER-STRENGTH: This book gives Peter Parker a lotta heart on many different levels. As Spider-Man, he would've sacrificed his life to beat the seemingly invincible Morlun; despite the giant welts and gashes, Pete still fought on. In his civilian life, Pete's grown farther than ever from his wife Mary Jane, whose return to modeling has widened the separation—and the sadness inside Peter is quite palpable, particularly in the silent issue (#39).

Straczynski's strongest contribution to Spider-lore undoubtedly is Aunt May, who's transformed from a frail old lady to a tough one since learning Peter's secret identity in ASM #35. As a result, she and Peter have grown much closer. And not only is May a much stronger support system for Pete, she's twice as sharp—witness ASM #43, as she and Peter get stopped by airport security because of his hidden web-shooters. May steps right to the plate to save his bacon, telling cops that the weapons are actually "a gynecological device"!

Straczynski also gives the title the strong social consciousness it once had during the Stan Lee/John Romita Sr. era of the 1960s, which tackled issues like drug abuse, campus unrest and the Vietnam War. Already during his run, JMS has spotlighted school shootings (#31), terrorism (in the moving issue #36) and homeless teens (#38). But JMS never preaches—he lets the point come across through Spider-Man's reactions. Case in point: In the teen shooting issue, when the culprit turns out to be the school nerd who's been bullied for too long, Peter realizes that could've been him if he'd allowed his rage to get the better of him.

And Romita Jr. complements Straczynski's masterful writing with his elite-class storytelling. When Spidey takes a beating from Morlun, you feel the bruises; when he experiences a moment of triumph after saving innocent children, you're celebrating with him. (And thank GOD JR's paired up with slick inker Scott Hanna and color kings Avalon Studios—Romita's art has never looked stronger.) JMS may design these building blocks, but Romita's the one putting them together like an expert engineer.

SPIDER-SENSE...TINGLING! Our gripes are nitpicky. The fish-outta-water three-parter with Spidey traveling to another dimension seemed odd (issues #40-#42). Straczynski's methodical pacing works more for a trade paperback than the monthly title—sometimes we can barely recall what happened last issue.

UPCOMING: Remember back in *Amazing* #32, when Ezekiel told Peter, "When you enter the ocean, you enter the food chain"? That's a hint as to what fans can expect in the coming months. "If the spider is the template for Peter's identity—his 'totem'—then he's about to discover that he's inherited something more than just powers," hints editor Alonso.

THE LAST WORD: Simply, well, amazing. A new golden era for the web-slinger in his flagship title.

GRADE: A-

THE PERFECT STORM JMS and Romita Jr. give Spidey a lotta heart, especially when Aunt May discovers Pete's secret (above).

PETER PARKER: SPIDER-MAN

CREATIVE TEAM: Writer Paul Jenkins, pencilers Mark Buckingham and Humberto Ramos and inker Wayne Faucher

THE WEB-LINE: Much like its *Amazing* counterpart, *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* follows the trials and tribulations of an adult Parker, giving special focus to his supporting cast from time to time. While a bulk of the series has been written and penciled by the creative duo of Jenkins and Buckingham, in recent months, several guest creators have stepped in to take a crack at the title, from superstar artist Humberto Ramos, indie artist Jim Mahfood and rookie scribe Zeb Wells.

SPIDER-STRENGTH: Ramos all the way. His flashy approach amps the energy level off the charts. The recent "Death in the Family" storyarc (*PP* #44-#47) shined as one of the strongest *Peter Parker* arcs to date, mostly because of Ramos' pencils. Looking through his four-issue run, Ramos was born to draw Spidey, giving him a perfect muscular-yet-gangly look. Not to mention, Ramos' rendition of nutjob Norman Osborn/the Green Goblin gave us chills each time he showed up. We'd love to see more of Ramos' take on Parker and his supporting cast, and now that we've seen him do interiors, just drawing the covers ain't gonna cut it.

The stories also can have some genuinely funny moments. Like in issue #37 when the Vulture's falling from the top of the Empire State Building and Spidey turns to the Human Torch and says, "Flip you for it."

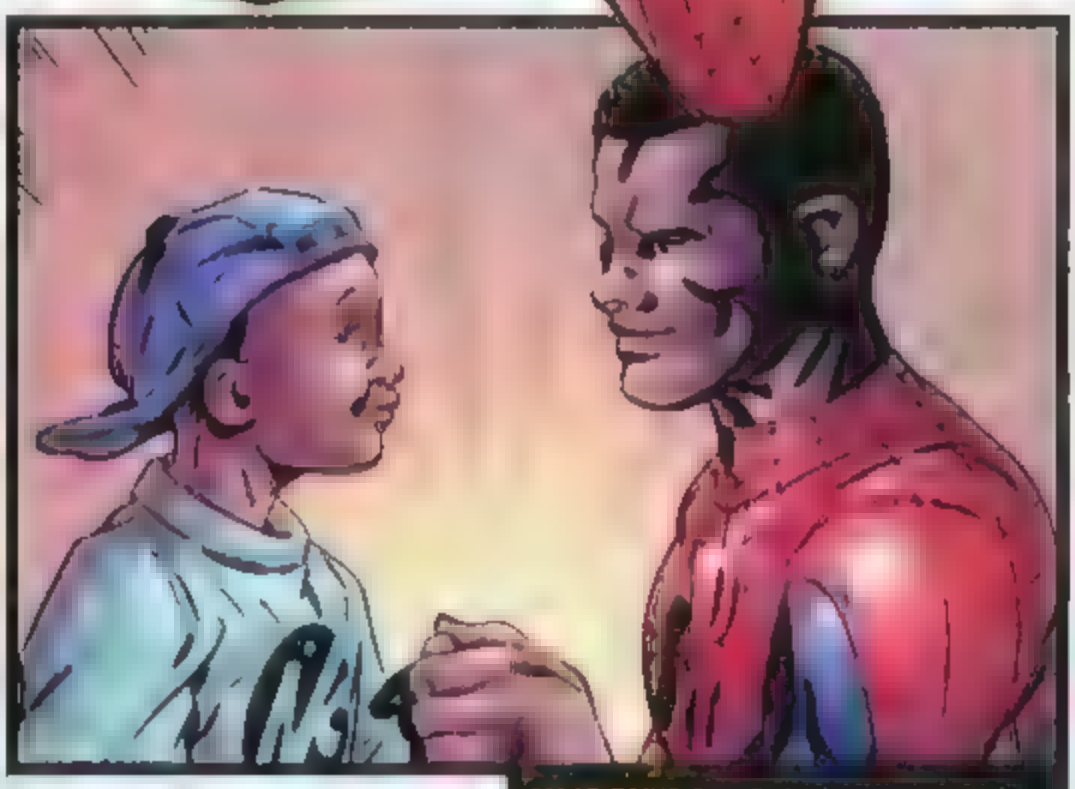
With *Peter Parker*, Jenkins has pulled off an all-ages Spidey title. You could easily give your little brother stories like "Heroes Don't Cry" (*PP* #35), in which an inner-city kid imagines he's Spider-Man's sidekick; or the flashback issue where Uncle Ben brought Peter to their annual Mets game (and the home team always lost); or the two-part "Fifteen Minutes of Shame" (*PP* #42-#43) where the team of Wells and Mahfood take a lighthearted jab at MTV. While it's a strength on one hand...

SPIDER-SENSE...TINGLING! *Peter Parker* just ain't exciting. Unlike *Amazing*, we can't recall a single change in the status quo or a scene that made us go "WOW!" Instead, many stories go for the more profound meanings that come off as forced. The cute stories can get a bit heavy-handed by trying too hard with their feel-good messages, like "Heroes Don't Cry" (moral: uhh, "heroes don't cry") or the Mets game flashback issue (moral: "in life, you win some and lose some"). Even the visually stunning "Death in the Family" ended on a flat, clichéd note: the Goblin voluntarily ended the circle of violence between him and Spidey, which left us scratching our heads. And in #38, Spidey fought mimes. Yes...mimes.

The villains can be either hokey or treated as jokes. Typeface (from issue #23, and future shoo-in for *Wizard*'s "Mort of the Month") threw big metal letters at people and carried a club in the shape of a comma. In issue #34, Spidey fights a mentally challenged mutant who could emit great energy blasts from his eyes and runs amok at a carnival. Even the Vulture in issue #37 is treated like a chump, when he believes Spidey's just laughing at him behind his back. (We recommend reading *Daredevil* #224 for how cool Vulture can be.)

UPCOMING: In November, Jenkins plans to make the web-slinger take on...Aunt May. Issue #50 will be double-sized and focuses on Peter's relationship with his aunt. "May decides she wants to know everything there is to know about Peter's other life," says Jenkins, "but Peter feels the truth might be dangerous to her."

THE LAST WORD: The recent Jenkins/Ramos run was definitely a step in the right direction, but *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* still has a ways to go before it catches up with the big dogs.



COLOR BLIND Peter Parker leans more toward forced "feel-good" stories, rather than exciting ones.

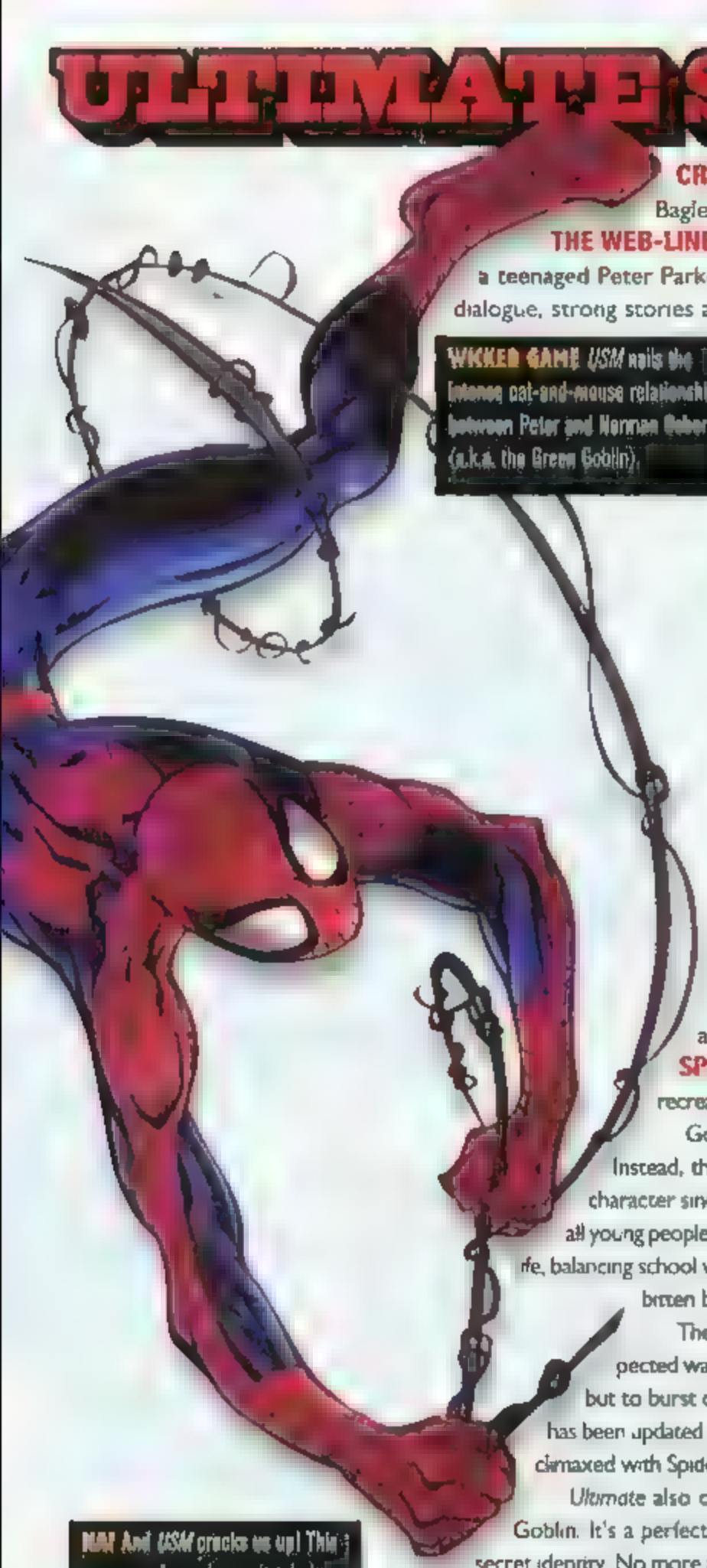
GRADE: C

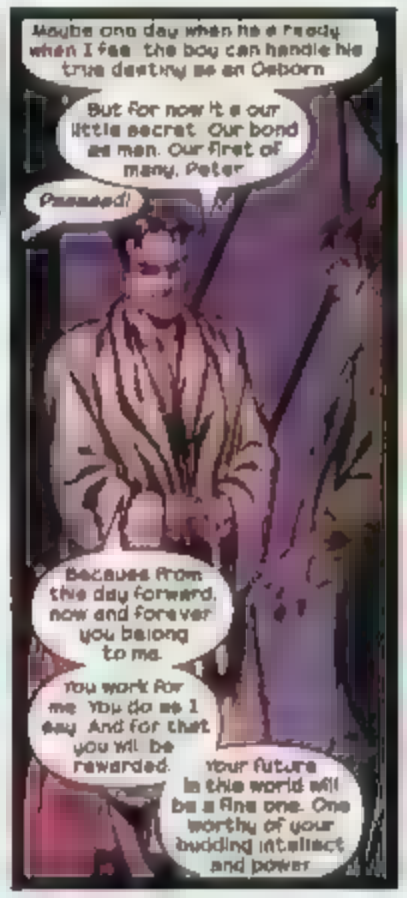
ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

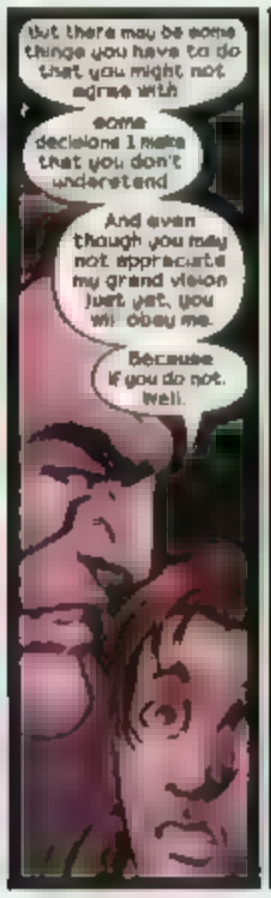
CREATIVE TEAM: Writer Brian Michael Bendis, penciler Mark Bagley and inker Art Thibert

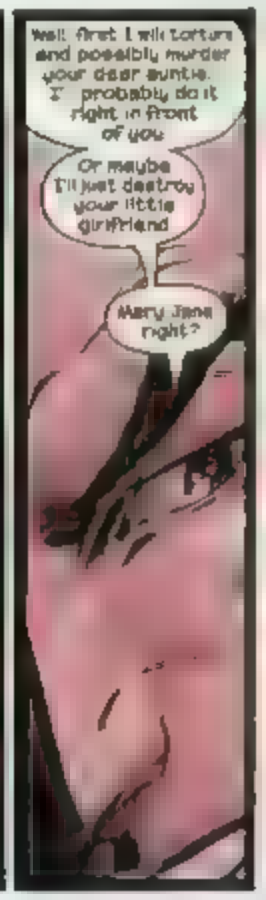
THE WEB-LINE: *Ultimate Spider-Man* puts the boy back into Spider-Man. Starring a teenaged Peter Parker who's only learning about the superhero biz, *Ultimate* combines hip dialogue, strong stories and new spins on Spidey's top villains. Bendis' Spider-Man reads as fresh and relevant as the original tales by co-creators Stan Lee and Steve Ditko.

WICKED GAME *USM* nails the intense cat-and-mouse relationship between Peter and Norman Osborn (a.k.a. the Green Goblin).

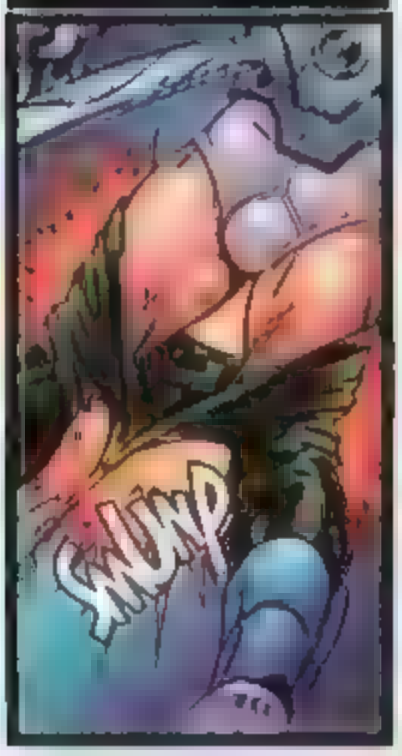



Maybe one day when he's ready when I feel the boy can handle his true destiny as an Osborn
But for now it's our little secret. Our bond as men. Our first of many, Peter.
Pressed!
Because from this day forward, now and forever you belong to me.
You work for me. You do as I say. And for that you will be rewarded.
Your future in this world will be a fine one. One worthy of your budding intellect and power.


But there may be some things you have to do that you might not agree with.
some decisions I make that you don't understand.
And even though you may not appreciate my grand vision just yet, you will obey me.
Because if you do not, well.


Well, first I will torture and possibly murder your dear auntie. I'll probably do it right in front of you.
Or maybe I'll just destroy your little girlfriend.
Mary Jane, right?

NAH! And *USM* cracks us up! This scene made us do a spit-take!



SPIDER-STRENGTH: Bendis' biggest strength as a Spidey scribe has been his ability to recreate a 21st century Spider-Man, without losing the character's core. Or be predictable. Gone are clones, marriage problems and a supporting cast the size of Montana. Instead, the writer replaces them with the magic that made Spider-Man Marvel's flagship character since his debut in 1962's *Amazing Fantasy* #15. Bendis' stories focus on the problems all young people have today: turbulent relationships with peers and friends and foes, a volatile home life, balancing school with jobs/social life... not to mention all the other woes that come along with being bitten by a genetically altered spider that endows you with superpowers.

The stories take nods from Spidey's humble beginnings, yet Bendis twists plots in unexpected ways. When revealing his identity to Mary Jane, her first reaction isn't that of "whoa," but to burst out in disbelieving laughter. The long, tense build-up of Kraven the Hunter—who has been updated as a reality-TV grandstander à la "Crocodile Hunter"—and his hunt for Spider-Man climaxed with Spidey simply clocking him unconscious with one punch.

Ultimate also capitalizes on the cat and mouse relationship between Spidey and the Green Goblin. It's a perfect intertwining of Peter's hero life and personal life, since the Goblin knows his secret identity. No more amnesia to cloud Norman Osborn's head—this time, he's around for keeps... and he plays for keeps, too. For every other victory, Pete knows the Goblin always looms large to keep him on his toes. The fact that Peter is still friends with the Goblin's son Harry further complicates things.

Much like Romita Jr. on *Amazing*, Mark Bagley's doing the work of his career. His gorgeous storytelling makes young characters look full of life and bad guys look they just stepped out of a horror show. Bagley draws this book so well, we couldn't see anyone else draw it.

SPIDER-SENSE...TINGLING! We wouldn't change a thing.

UPCOMING: A lot's going to change in Spidey's life during the last three months of 2002 when the *Ultimate Spider-Man* goes biweekly. Issue #28 is "a fun little high school oriented story to brighten everything after the increasingly scary Green Goblin finale," Bendis says. Issues #29-#32 creates a dramatic change in Peter's relationship with Gwen Stacy, as a fake Spider-Man runs about the city robbing banks, which doesn't make Spidey any friends in the media. Then in issue #33, a six-part story starts by introducing Eddie Brock/Venom which, says Bendis, "brings the most original and bold ideas to Peter's past and the largest revamp of a classic Spidey character since the series began."

THE LAST WORD: All in all, Bendis and Bagley do the perfect job of keeping the feel of a classic Spider-Man story while still making sure the book keeps a witty, fun and relevant tone. If Lee and Ditko were creating Spider-Man today, these are the stories they'd tell. Just ask Lee: "I applaud everything Marvel is done with the Ultimate line, especially *Ultimate Spider-Man*," says Spidey's co-creator. "After so many years, it's got to be tough for creators to come up with new and interesting stories. *Ultimate Spider-Man* seems to do that every month." 'Nuff said.

GRADE: A

SPIDER-MAN'S TANGLED WEB

CREATIVE TEAM: Various

THE WEB-LINE: One of the more unique Spider-Man titles to hit stands in some time, *Tangled Web* focuses on the peripheral cast rather than the Spidey himself. Not to mention, the list of writers and artists who have contributed stories to the anthology—from Brian Azzarello to Bruce Jones to even the WWE's Raven—lends credibility to this new title, making it the rookie sensation of the Spider-Man line.

SPIDER-STRENGTH: *Tangled Web*'s format allows two great things. First, *Web*'s slant explores how great Spidey's vast world is through its supporting cast and villains. It also taps big name writers or artists like Garth Ennis, Brian Azzarel o and Greg Rucka who have the potential to tell some wonderfully unique Spidey stories.

Rucka's story, in particular, with artist Eduardo Risso ("Severance Package" in *Tangled Web* #4) illustrates how powerful *Web* can be. In their tale, a lackey of the Kingpin must face the music after Sp dey busts up a caper; it even ranked among our "Top 10 Books of the Past Decade."

Peter M lligan and Duncan Fregado's "Flowers for Rhino" (#5-#6) saw the dim-witted supervil ain undergo brain-enhancing experiments, but he learns intelligence comes with a price. Writer Bruce Jones' "Gentlemen's Agreement" (#7-#9) told of a term nally ill cab driver who tries to sell Spidey's secret identity to help his estranged family. In issue #14, Azzarello (with co-writer/pro wrestler Raven) gave Crusher Hogan, the wrestler who Peter Parker bested before he became Spidey, a new dimension; here, Hogan refuses to be washed up after losing to Spidey, so he reinvigorates pro wrestling with trash talk.

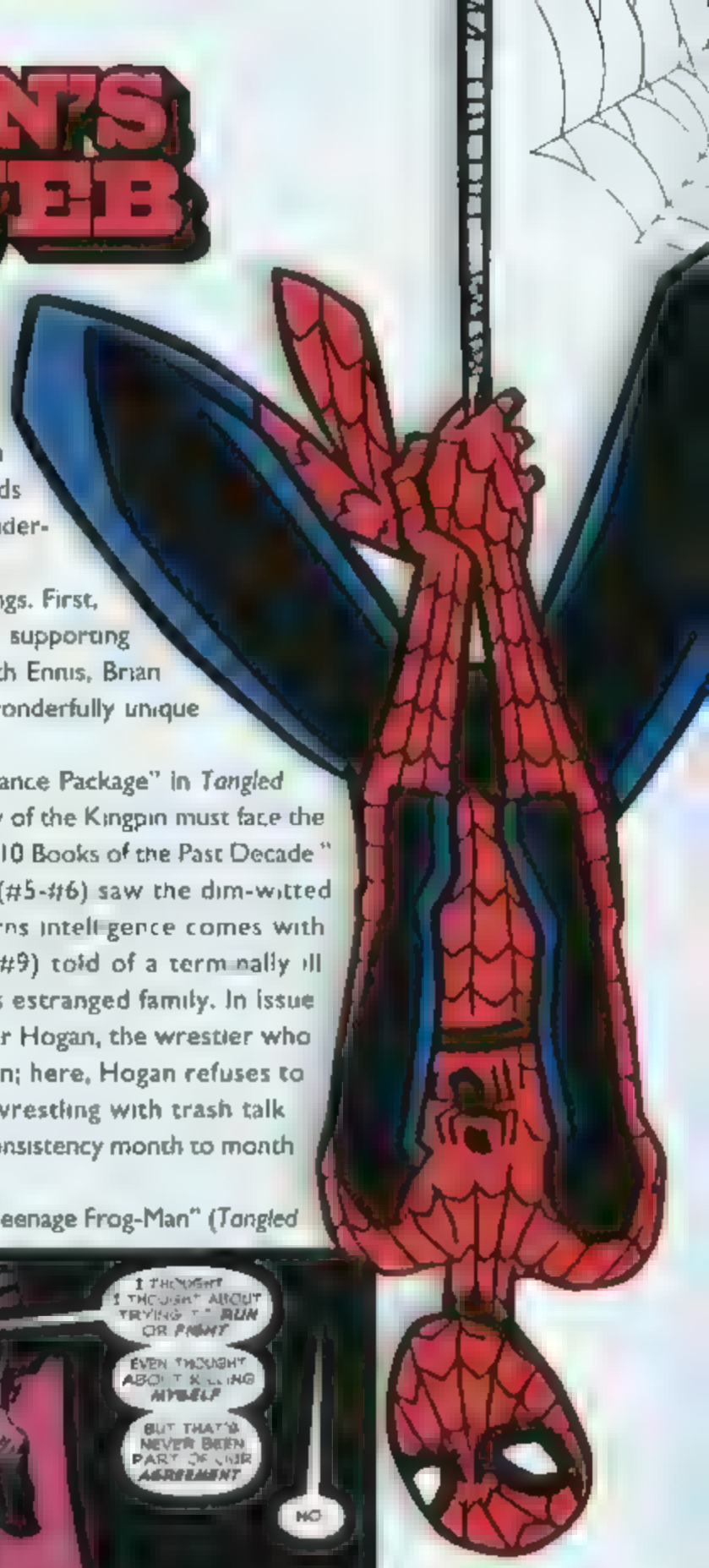
SPIDER-SENSE...TINGLING! Diversity has its price. There's no consistency month to month since a completely new creative team takes over every few issues.

For every two "Severance Packages," there's another "I Was a Teenage Frog-Man" (*Tangled Web* #43), a tepid story starring the son of the villain Leap Frog, who has to deal with his father getting out of prison. Not everything is gonna appeal to everyone—and that's both the strength and weakness.

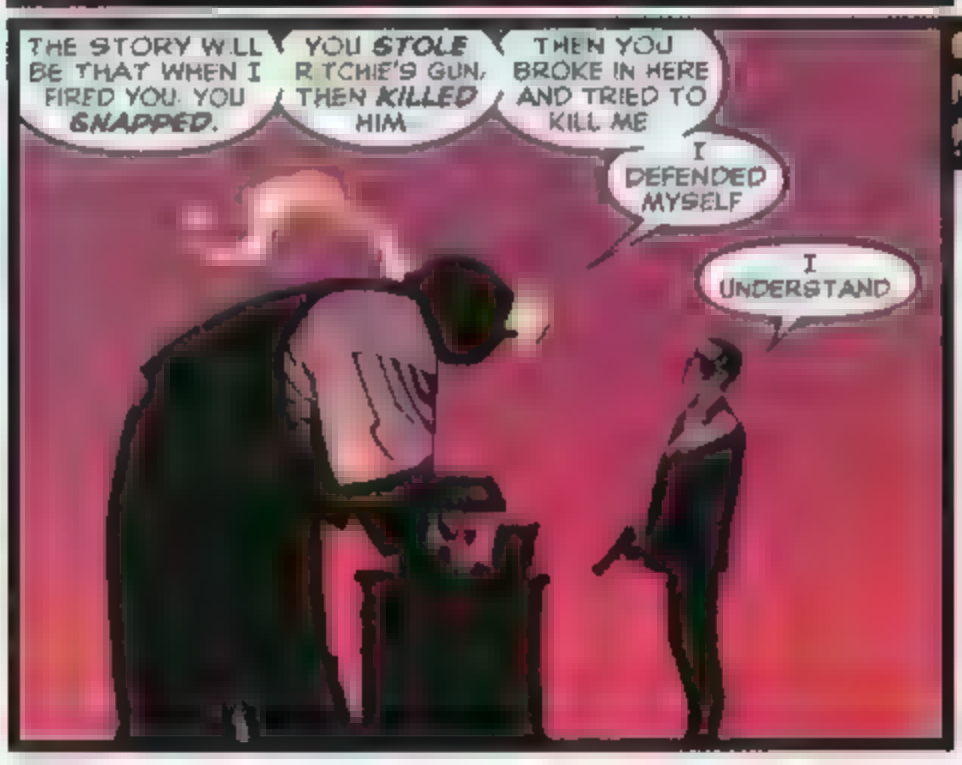
UPCOMING: November's issue #20 by Zeb Wells and Dean Haspiel stars J. Jonah Jameson. "It puts Jonah in the psychiatrist's couch," says A onso. "It ll explore a nuance about Jameson we may have suspected, even if he doesn't know it himself." In December, Darwyn Cooke returns for another holiday specal. Says Alonso: "Spidey faces an evil even he can't defeat—Christmas shopping."

THE LAST WORD: One month *Tangled Web* will blow you away, while some make you demand your $2.99 back. (w)

GRADE: B-



I THOUGHT I THOUGHT ABOUT TRYING IT. RUN OR FIGHT
EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT KILLING MYSELF
BUT THAT'S NEVER BEEN PART OF OUR AGREEMENT
NO

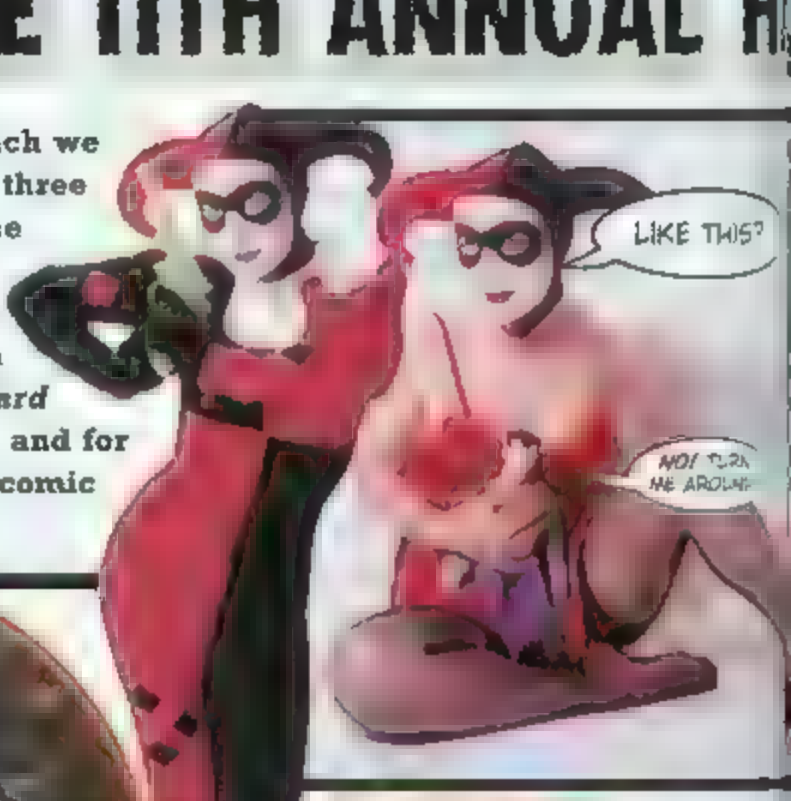

THE STORY WILL BE THAT WHEN I FIRED YOU. YOU SNAPPED.
YOU STOLE RITCHIE'S GUN, THEN KILLED HIM
THEN YOU BROKE IN HERE AND TRIED TO KILL ME
I DEFENDED MYSELF
I UNDERSTAND

GOOD TO SAD "Severance Package" (at left) from *Tangled Web* #4 shined, while others have flopped.

All Dressed No Place T

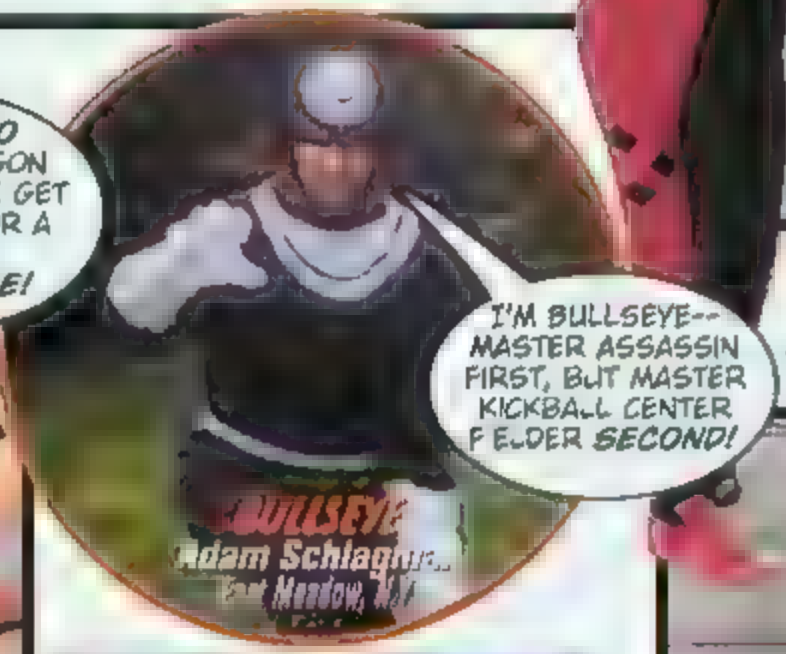
THE WINNERS OF THE 11TH ANNUAL H

EVERY TIME we run this contest reminds us how much we love Halloween. This year our youngest entrant is a wee three months old, and our oldest entrant is a vivacious 65! The most popular costume? Jango Fett. The best presentations? Photo sets that told a story! We also noticed another growing trend: kids! Lots of pictures of kids in goofy costumes sent in by their parents, long-time *Wizard* readers all! Unfortunately, there can be only one winner, and for their effort, they walk away with over $1,000 worth of cool comic loot! Yay! But first, a look at plenty of Honorable Mentions:

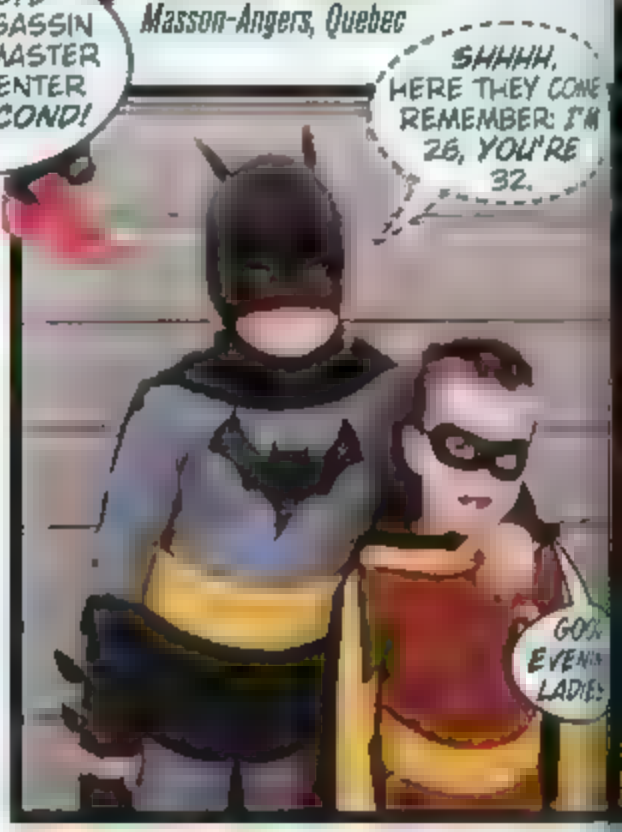


GOKU
Chris Gable
Goderich, Ontario

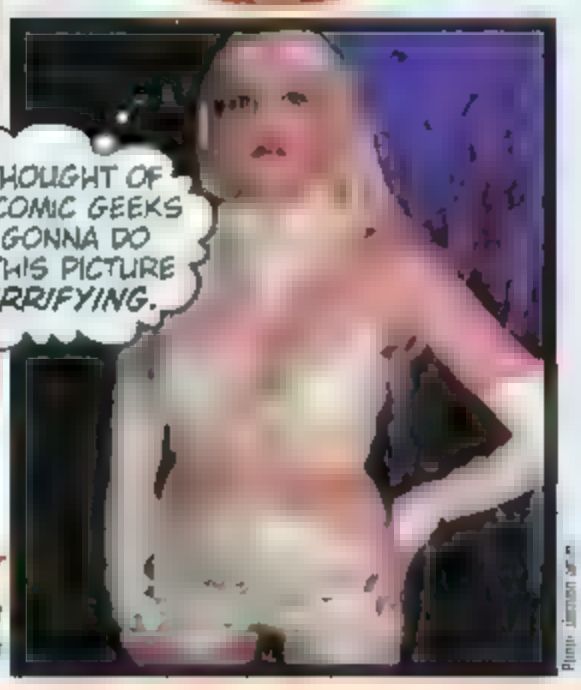
BULLSEYE
Adam Schlagm...
Fort Meadow, N.Y.



HARLEY QUINN
Nathalie Mineault
Masson-Angers, Quebec



EMMA FROST
Athanacia
Columbus, Ohio



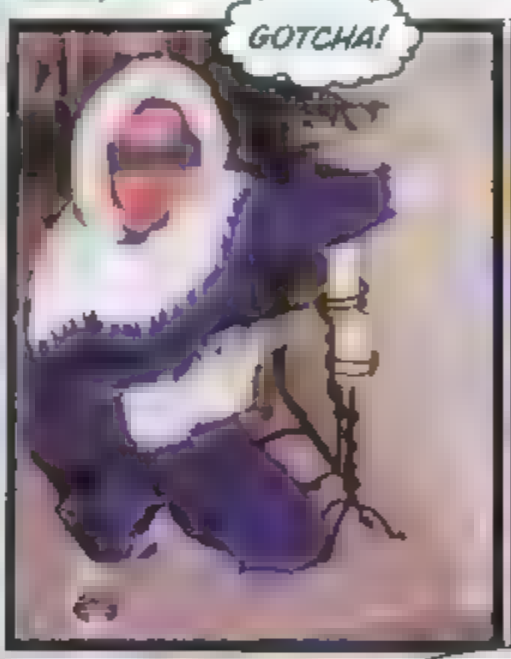
BATMAN & ROBIN
Kipton and Gina Garrett
Van Buren, Ark.

BATMAN Nathan Garrett • *ROBIN* Zachary Garrett

UP WITH GO

OWEEN COSTUME CONTEST

CAPTAIN COLD
Jason E. Haubner
Glendale, Ariz.



I COULD'VE SWORN THERE USED TO BE A HOOTERS AROUND HERE...
I THINK I'VE BEEN USING MY AB-ROLLER INCORRECTLY...
DO I HEAR 65?
COME ON FOLKS, THIS IS AN INCREDIBLE VINTAGE PIECE...
I SHOULDN'T HAVE HAD ALL THOSE MASHED POTATOES...
I'M STILL EMPTY INSIDE

ABBEY CHASE
Mike Lewis
Florence, S.C.

ABBEY CHASE Christy McKay

AQUAMAN, GOLDEN AGE GREEN LANTERN, SILVER AGE GREEN LANTERN, FLASH, SPACE GHOST
Scott Crawford
Columbus, Ohio

AQUAMAN & GREEN LANTERNS Scott Crawford • FLASH & SPACE GHOST John Kaufman

GEORGE LUCAS
Bill O'Neill
Studio City, CA

ABSORBING MAN
Greg and Amy Wing
Lakewood, Ohio

ABSORBING MAN Connor Wing (Three months old!)

THE GREATEST AMERICAN HERO
Jeff Polak
Worthington, Ohio

SNAKE-EYES VS. STORMSHADOW

Matt Wendt
Chisago City, Minn.

SNAKE EYES: Matt Wendt • STORMSHADOW: Andy Stoltzman

IT'S THE ULTIMATE GRUDGE MATCH AS G.I. JOE'S MACHO COMMANDO ***SNAKE-EYES*** TAKES ON COBRA'S BADASS NINJA ***STORMSHADOW!*** BUT WHO WILL TRIUMPH IN THIS DECADES-OLD BATTLE OF WILLS? LET'S GET IT ON!

FUELED BY A HEARTY BREAKFAST, ***SNAKE-EYES*** GETS AN EARLY START...BUT LOSES POINTS BY SCORING SOME EXTRA CASH ON THE SIDE WITH PRODUCT PLACEMENTS. ***BOO, SNAKE-EYES!*** MINUS TWO POINTS!

TWO POINTS TO ***STORMSHADOW*** FOR GUEST HOSTING ***"THE MUPPET SHOW"*** AND COPPING A FELT FEEL ON SCOOTER! THE COBRA NINJA'S IN THE LEAD ONE TO NEGATIVE TWO!

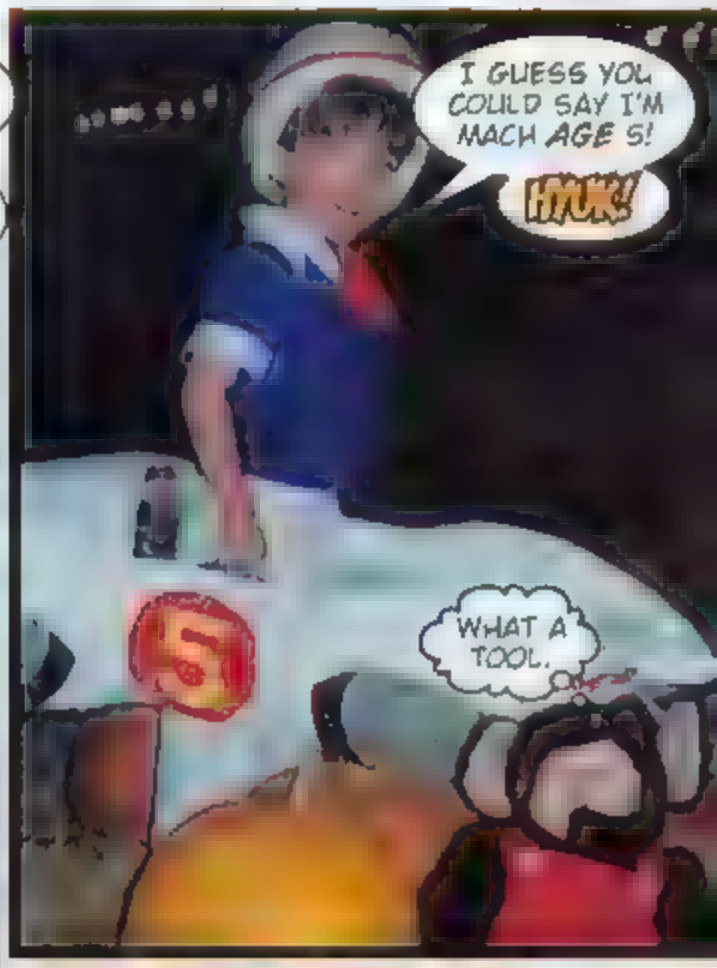
BUT WHAT'S COOLER THAN HOSTING WITH MUPPETS? ***PARTYING WITH MUPPETS!*** TWO POINTS TO ***SNAKE-EYES*** FOR DRINKING THE ELECTRIC MAYHEM UNDER THE TABLE!

BUT WAIT. ***SNAKE-EYES*** DOES THE LANDSCAPING AT WIZARD HQ, EARNING SERIOUS TEACHER'S PET STATUS AND SCORING AN IMPRESSIVE THREE POINTS! IS IT...***CAN IT BE...?!?***

YES! SNAKE-EYES TAKES HOME THE WIN 3-1, PROVING THAT NINJAS ARE STUPID AND THAT SUCKING UP A LITTLE CAN PUT YOU AHEAD IN LIFE! ***YO, JOE!***

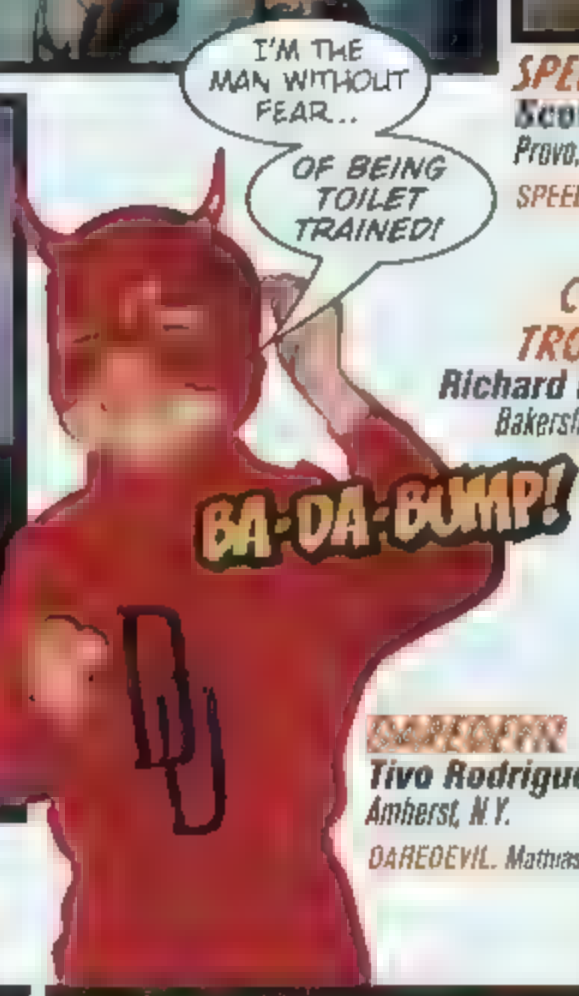
CAPTAIN AMERICA
Jerry L. Sims (65 years young!)
Kokomo, Ind.

WITCHBLADE
Jay Willoughby
Greenbelt, Md.
WITCHBLADE. Lena A. Walsh



SPEED RACER & CHIM-CHIM
Scott McDonald
Provo, Utah
SPEED RACER Patrick Greding • CHIM-CHIM Chandler Greding

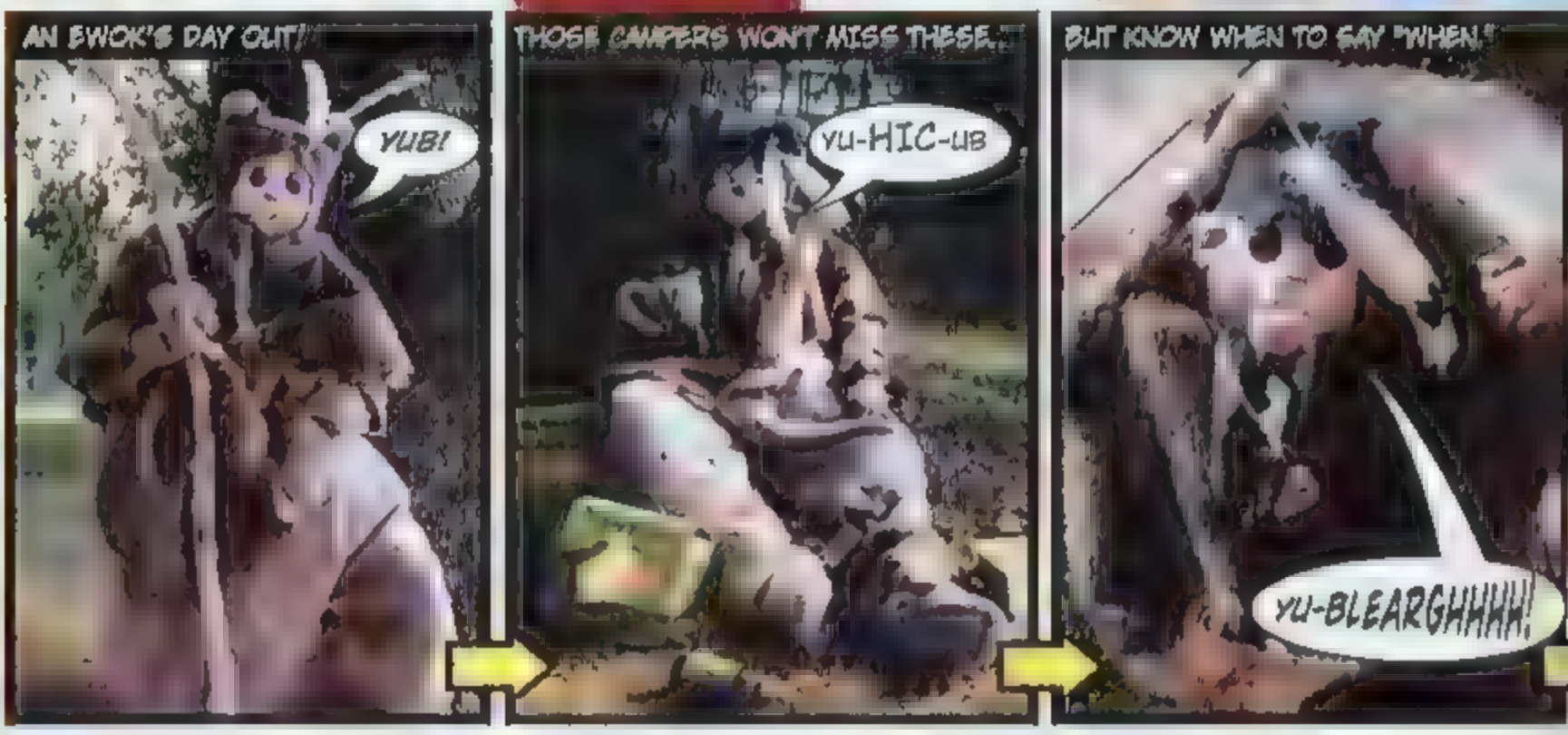
Joyce [illegible] and Victor Borrell
Dodge Comic Mini
[illegible] Victoria Alexander Cortez



COBRA TROOPER
Richard Munoz
Bakersfield, Calif.

DAREDEVIL
Tivo Rodriguez
Amherst, N.Y.
DAREDEVIL. Mathias Rodriguez

EWOK
Anne-Marie Saucier
Grasonville, Md.



THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU MAKE OUT WITH COURTNEY LOVE, KIDS.

TWO-FACE
Christopher Uhrin
Burlington, Ontario

THEY'RE REAL...AND SPECTACULAR!

LARA CROFT
Vera VanGuard
New York, N.Y.

I MAY POOP PELLETS, BUT THEY ARE HONORABLE PELLETS.

ANNNND.. SCENE.

TIME TO MAKE THE DONUTS!

MISS MARVEL
Jerry Roddey
Lancaster, S.C.

TRANSFORM.. AND GO POTTY

OPTIMUS PRIME
Pallozzi

I'M HERE TO MAKE SURE NO ONE STEALS AN EXTRA COMMUNION WAFER.

OH, SNARFER.. THAT WASN'T A FART!

USAGI YOJIMBO, VASH THE STAMPEDE, NICHOLAS D. WOLFWOOD & SNARF
Andrea Riley and Sarah Zielinski
Whitewater, Wis.

VASH THE STAMPEDE Matt Bigelow • NICHOLAS D. WOLFWOOD Marcus Bigelow • SNARF Sarah Zielinski • USAGI YOJIMBO Andrea Riley

SAFETY FIRST: ALWAYS CHECK BOTH WAYS WHEN YOU CROSS.

KUFURAL!

REMEMBER,..NO WITNESSES + NO EVIDENCE = NO CRIME.

YU YUB

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL!

AND THEM'S GOOD EATIN'!

...

I HOPE NOBODY NOTICES THE STAIN I MADE ON THE WALL...
WHY'D RANDALL PAINT MY BOYS BLUE IF I'M WEARING PANTS?
THREE, FOUR, FIVE
YEP, I'M GONNA NEED FIVE RESTRAINING ORDERS, OFFICER.
MY TIARA'S JUST A SKOOTCH TOO TIGHT.
PSSST, RORSCHACH... SHOULD I SHOOT "LIL' NITE OWL?"
...YABOS YABOS YABOS YABOS YABOS...

GRAND-PRIZE WINNER

THE WATCHMEN

Randall Kirby

Ontario, Ore.

NITE OWL: Pete Lawson • DR. MANHATTAN: Dan Dickenson • COMEDIAN: Randall Kirby • SILK SPECTRE: Jennifer Bean
OZYMANDIAS: Garrett Lamb • ROHSCHACH: Joe Taormina

Who washes the Watchmen? Randall Kirby does—not only washing the costumes, but also designing them, sewing them and recruiting the team to fill them.

While Alan Moore deconstructed superheroes in *Watchmen*, this year's Halloween costume contest winner reconstructed all six costumes from scratch with wood, rubber and other materials from the hardware store where he works. He cut and shaped water heater pans to create the shoulder pieces of Nite Owl and Ozymandias. Rorschach's coat was spray painted, jumped on and beaten against a tree to capture that perfect hidden-in-a-trash-heap look.

Costumes complete, 27-year-old Kirby sought five willing victims to fill them. Luckily, as a community theatre actor in downtown Ontario, Ore., it was easy to find friends used to doing ridiculous things for attention. In fact, two regular performers, Dan Dickenson and Jennifer Bean, had posed last year in Kirby's entry of Planetary costumes, helping him win an honorable mention

Once at the photo shoot, the camera was unrelenting and all seeing. "Last year we had to make Pete [Lawson] suck in his gut to be Batman," explains Kirby, referring to an entry he created that didn't make the cut. "This year we had to get him to stick his gut out to be Nite Owl."

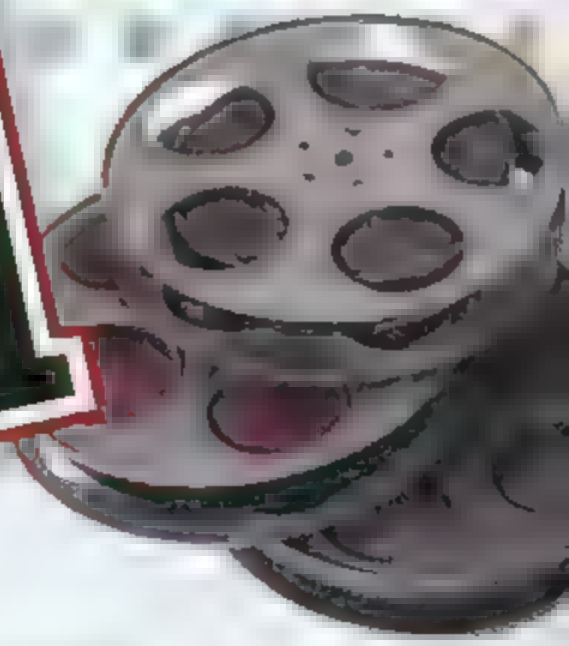
Under the hot lights, Bean's plastic costume was uncomfortably warm. "After it was done, she just started ripping it off to throw it away," laughs Kirby. "The photographer started to go, 'Whoa, this is wild!'"

With almost 10 years of amateur costume making under his belt, there's no knowing whose dirty laundry Kirby will be airing next. ■ **DAVE MARSHALL**

[redacted] and kudos to all of the Honorable Mention win[redacted] And, of course, much love to all of this year[redacted] without you[redacted]! You guys rock[redacted]

By the WIZARD Staff

Reel Life



WIZARD's guide to 2002-03's newest and hottest comic-related TV and movie projects

X-MEN 2

MAJOR PLAYERS: BRYAN SINGER (director), HUGH JACKMAN (Wolverine), HALLE BERRY (Storm), PATRICK STEWART (Professor Charles Xavier), IAN McKELLEN (Magneto), FAMKE JANSSEN (Dr. Jean Grey), JAMES MARSDEN (Cyclops/Scott Summers), REBECCA ROMIJN-STAMOS (Mystique), ALAN CUMMING (Nightcrawler/Kurt Wagner), ANNA PAQUIN (Rogue/Marie), KELLY HU (Lady Deathstrike/Anna Reynolds), BRIAN COX (Gen. Stryker), RALPH WINTER and LAUREN SHULER DONNER (producers), AVI ARAD, TOM DeSANTO, STAN LEE, DAVID GORDER (executive producers), 20TH CENTURY FOX (studio)
RELEASE DATE: MAY 2, 2003

PREMISE: The X-Men are mutants with vast superpowers who unite to defend other mutants and mankind at large, despite the fact they are both feared and hated by *homo sapiens*.

THE SCOOP: Penned primarily by David Hayter, Fox's "X-Men 2" revolves around Wolverine searching for the answers to who he is while the X-Men battle the Stryker Crusade, a movement intent on wiping out mutants everywhere. According to Singer, the film is loosely based on his favorite X-Men story from the comics, Chris Claremont and Brent Anderson's 1982 graphic novel, *God Loves, Man Kills*.

[Brian Cox] plays a general named William Stryker," reveals Singer. "He's kind of an amalgam. He's not a religious figure, he's a military guy. But he has a history with a lot of [the X-Men] characters. He's a human nemesis from their past. When they were emerging, he was emerging—in his own way."

Reportedly, the over-$100 million budget is almost twice what was spent on the original "X-Men" film—which grossed over $200 million—giving Singer a chance to really flex his muscles with added CGI scenes and other special effects-heavy plans that will make "X-Men 2" Marvel Studios' most ambitious film to date. The more extravagant budget also allowed Singer to add new cast members and characters such as Nightcrawler and Colossus.

The director also revealed that Nightcrawler won't necessarily be the fun-loving mutant he is in the comics. "For Nightcrawler, you won't know which side he's on. He sort of gets sucked in the middle of good and bad."

While many fans were hoping for the mutant-hunting Sentinels to make an appearance in "X-Men 2," it looks like they just proved too expensive and unwieldy for the production. And Singer recently admitted that he had to cut an entire scene featuring the Danger Room and a fight between Wolverine and Cyclops to stay within his budget.

"We're going to have 750-850 visual effect shots in the movie," says Singer. "There is this neat thing with some ice [with the Iceman/Bobby Drake character]. We'll put it in another trailer or something."

X-CELLENT ADVENTURE

In "X-Men 2," Professor Xavier and Magneto (below) will be forced to team up against a human militant group, while Wolverine (bottom left) will do the dirty work against evil mutants like Mystique (bottom right).

DAREDEVIL

PREMISE: When young bookworm Matt Murdock is hit across the eyes by a radioactive isotope, he's struck blind, but gains amazing heightened powers in the senses that remain. He dives even further into his studies, training his body and mind to become Daredevil, Marvel Comics' lawyer-by-day and crimefighter-by-night.

THE SCOOP: Director Mark Steven Johnson, a longtime comic fan, has waited years for the opportunity to bring "Daredevil" to the big screen. His script is heavily influenced by both Frank Miller's 1980s *Daredevil* work, and the recent Kevin Smith-Joe Quesada "Guardian Devil" storyline. "Daredevil has always been a great character, right from his earliest days," says Johnson. "But c'mon? The Stilt-Man? It was Frank Miller who gave Daredevil the great villains, when Bullseye came in and the Kingpin really got involved."

They'll also be involved in Johnson's script, as DD is drawn into battle against the Kingpin of Crime and the Kingpin's master assassin, Bullseye. All the while, DD's former lover, Elektra, now returned as a deadly assassin in her own right, tries to pick a side in the ongoing war.

Battles in that war will be many, and the action will be spot-on realistic. Johnson is a competitive kickboxer, and will settle for nothing less than reality in fight scenes. Chinese martial arts instructors were brought in to help Affleck and Garner with fights. The language barrier made for some funny moments on set—once, when trying to explain that he had performed a move incorrectly, an instructor told Affleck that he was "Superman in Japan"—whatever that means. And all 6-foot-5 and 340 pounds of Michael Clarke Duncan (Kingpin) brings an extra dose of heavy reality.

"We didn't want to do a CGI effect with a smaller actor blown up into big size, because Daredevil is all about reality," Johnson added. "To me, Daredevil is the most realistic of all superheroes, so I had to leave out that CGI world. I mean, I'm the biggest geek of them all. I want my comic characters to look like the comic book, yeah. But more importantly, I want them to have the spirit of the comic book. That's the No. 1 thing. And that's what this has

MAJOR PLAYERS: BEN AFFLECK (Matt Murdock/Daredevil), JENNIFER GARNER (Elektra), MICHAEL CLARKE DUNCAN (Kingpin), COLIN FARRELL (Bullseye), JON FAVREAU (Foggy Nelson), JOE PANTOLIANO (Ben Urich), MARK STEVEN JOHNSON (writer/director), GARY FOSTER (producer), 20TH CENTURY FOX (studio)

RELEASE DATE: FEB. 14, 2003

DEVILISH BEHAVIOR Ben Affleck (opposite page) portrays blind superhero Daredevil, who must contend with his former love Elektra (Jennifer Garner, top), now a hired killer, as well as psychotic nemesis Bullseye, played by Colin Farrel (above).

BIRDS OF PREY

PREMISE: Three crimefighting *femme fatales* protect the mean streets of "New Gotham," an even darker near-future version of DC Comics' famed home of the Batman. While the Birds of Prey are a mystery to most of the city, one policeman, Detective Jake Reese, is intent on unraveling their secrets

THE SCOOP: These Birds take wing based on the trio from DC's *Birds of Prey*, albeit in slightly changed forms. Oracle remains the now-paralyzed former Batgirl, but the Huntress is now the love child of a Batman/Catwoman union. And Dinah is no longer the sonic scream-powered Black Canary, but rather an innocent teenage girl troubled by strange psychic visions.

New twists on old characters are fine, according to Brian Robbins, who's executive producer on both "Birds of Prey" and the WB hit "Smallville." In fact, they're even better here.

'Because these are characters not as well-known, we get to play with the mythology even more," Robbins says. "The success of 'Smallville' paved the way for 'Birds of Prey.' But audiences will see that there are many differences. If we were just doing the same thing, that would be boring, right?'

The Huntress is there to make sure things never get boring. She's a *real* ass-kicker, and thanks to her parentage, she has an interesting past. "Because Huntress is the daughter of Catwoman and Batman, we refer to the effects that they had on her," says Laeta Kalogridis, the show's creator/writer/executive producer

MAJOR PLAYERS: DINA MEYER (Barbara Gordon/Oracle), ASHLEY SCOTT (Helena Kyle/Huntress), RACHEL SKARSTEN (Dinah), SHEMAR MOORE (Detective Jake Reese), WB (TV network), LAETA KALOGRIDIS (creator/writer/executive producer), BRIAN ROBBINS (executive producer)

TIME SLOT: WEDNESDAYS at 9 p.m. (EST), weekly on the WB network, starting on OCT. 9

Dina Meyer is already into her role "Like Oracle, I am quite the cybergeek," she says. "I've done a lot of research. I didn't know a *whole* lot about the character, aside from the fact that she's got an enormous fan base, and very high expectations. She's a favorite character."

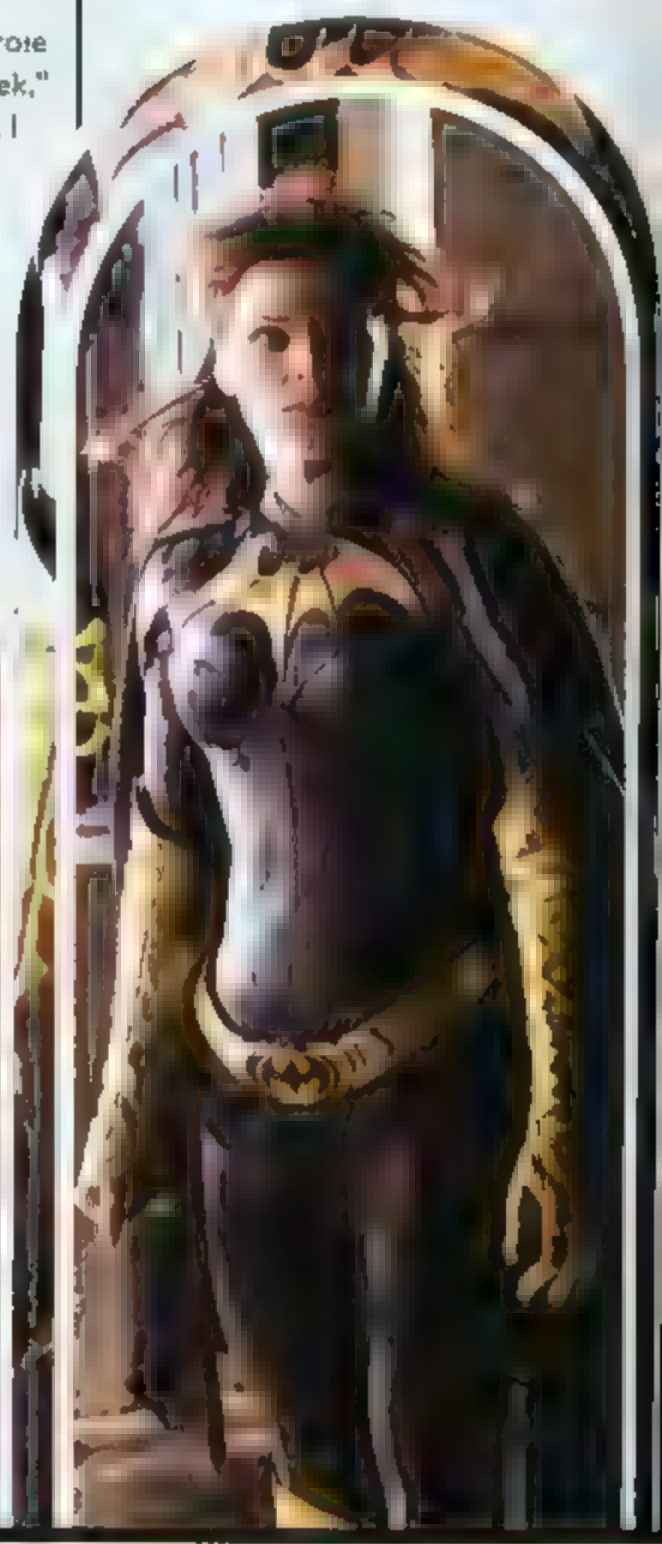
Rachel Skarsten is ready for a demanding, physical role—she's a competitive hockey player from Canada. And Shemar Moore (Detective Jake Reese) is ready, too.

"I run into these divas jumping from rooftop to rooftop, and I'm a man's man," he chuckles. "Anything that looks like that, I'm going to chase."

Robbins says the stories will be about "real people with real problems," but the comic world will abound as well. Alfred Pennyworth, Batman's loyal butler, will appear, and Harleen Quinzell (a.k.a. the villainess Harley Quinn) will appear as a recurring character as the Huntress' therapist. And yes, it's the Harley we've all come to know and love

"She's the 'Batman Animated' character, the Joker's paramour," says Kalogridis. "She's going to go on and try to fill her puddin's shoes."

BACK AT THE NEST Oracle (Dina Meyer), the former Batgirl (at right) until she was paralyzed by the Joker, confers with Huntress (Ashley Scott) about Dinah (Rachel Skarsten) joining the team.



LADY BIRDS The criminals of New Gotham will be surrendering by the truckload when they go against the beautiful *femme fatales* of the Birds of Prey (L-R): Huntress (Ashley Scott), Oracle (Nina Meyer) and Dinah (Rachel Skarsten).

ANGEL

MAJOR PLAYERS: Joss Whedon (creator/writer/executive producer), David Boreanaz (Angel), Charisma Carpenter (Cordelia Chase), Alexis Denisof (Wesley Wyndam-Pryce), J. August Richards (Charles Gunn), Amy Acker (Winifred Burkle), Vincent Kartheiser (Connor), Andy Hallett (Lorne)

TIME SLOT: Sundays at 9 p.m. on the WB; season premiere airs Oct. 6

PREMISE: A formerly sadistic vampire cursed with a soul, Angel tries to redeem himself by helping the helpless in Los Angeles. Teaming up with a gang of bad-ass human cohorts, Angel battles supernatural evil that most people don't even know exists.

THE SCOOP: Last season saw the impossible happen when Angel's former girlfriend showed up carrying his child. The baby was eventually stolen away to a demon dimension, where it was raised by Angel's greatest enemy. Upon his return, Angel's now-teenage son Conner swore one mission—kill his father. Series regular Cordelia Chase was also promoted to godhood in last season's finale, leaving no one to rescue Angel.

Expect big things from "Angel" this season, including a showdown with his son, the death of one of last season's regulars, Angel's heart to beat again by Episode Three and a few guest appearances by rogue Slayer Faith, played by Eliza Dushku ("Bring It On").

BATMAN VS. SUPERMAN

MAJOR PLAYERS: Colin Farrell (Bruce Wayne/Batman), reportedly, Josh Hartnett or Jude Law (Clark Kent/Superman), Andrew Kevin Walker (writer), Wolfgang Petersen (director), Warner Bros. (studio)

RELEASE DATE: TBD

PREMISE: The world's two greatest crimefighters—Batman and Superman—joins forces to rid Metropolis and Gotham City of a terrible menace that threatens to destroy both cities. Oh, and there will definitely be a fight between the two heroes thrown in for good measure.

THE SCOOP: Director Wolfgang Petersen ("The Perfect Storm") committed to the project in July, and fans went nuts when it was announced the film was scheduled for a summer 2004 release. But Petersen's going to work on another project called "Troy" before any work gets done on "Batman vs. Superman," so a release date is now up in the air.

Warner Bros. had decided to put production of Frank Miller's "Batman: Year One" film adaptation and the long-delayed "Superman" film on the back burner in favor of the "Batman vs. Superman" film, but now it looks as if production on those two separate projects will continue.

While Warner Bros. neither confirms nor denies any rumored casting choices, sources close to the studio indicate that Colin Farrell—who'll play Bullseye in the "Daredevil" film hitting Feb. 13, 2003—could take on the role of Batman, while Jude Law ("A.I.") and Josh Hartnett ("Black Hawk Down") have been rumored to be in contention to play the Man of Steel.

BATMAN: YEAR ONE

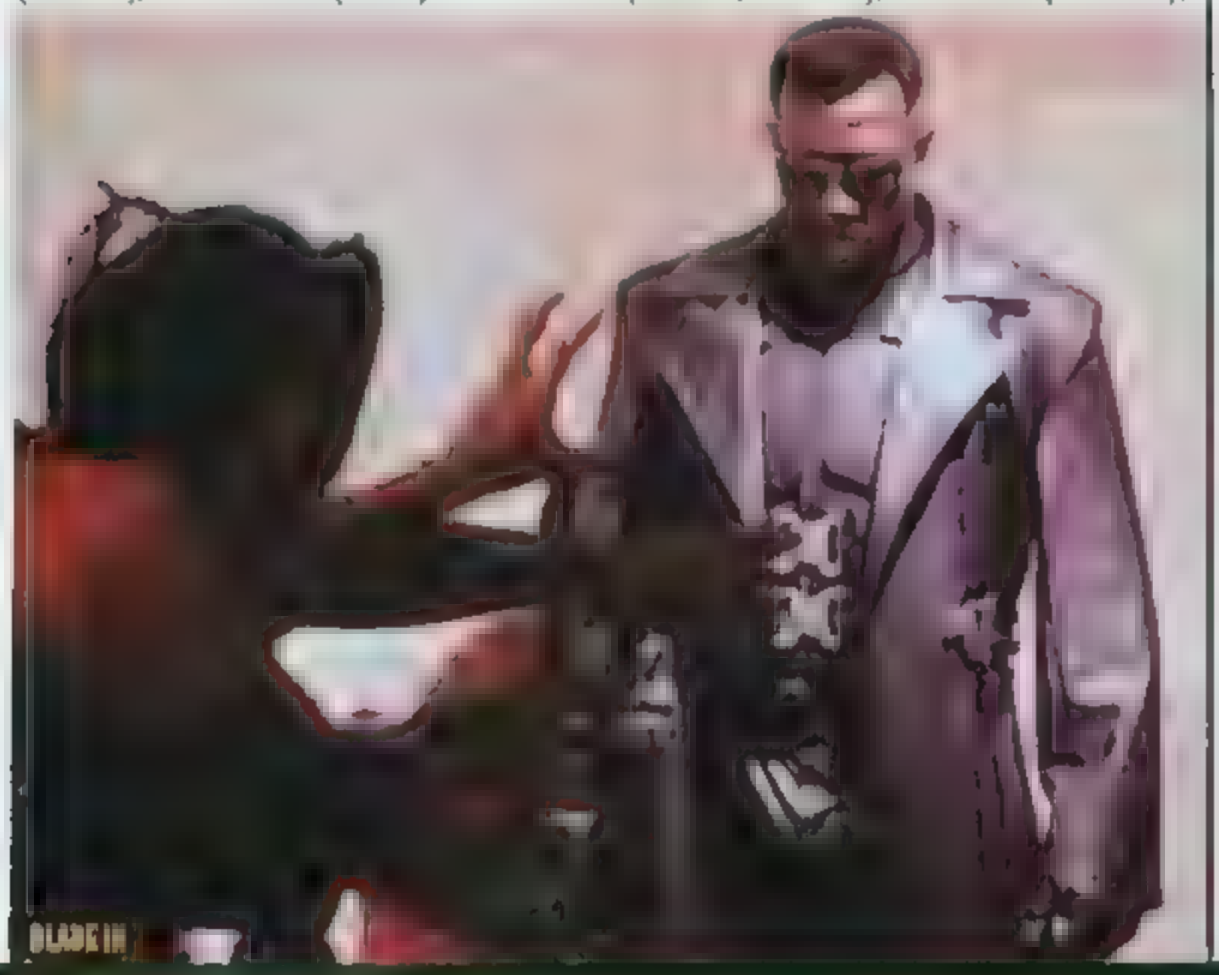
MAJOR PLAYERS: Darren Aronofsky (director, co-writer), Frank Miller (co-writer), Bo Welch (production designer), Warner Bros. (studio)

RELEASE DATE: TBD

PREMISE: After witnessing the murder of his parents, young Bruce Wayne sets out to rid Gotham City of crime under the guise of the Caped Crusader, Batman. "Year One" follows Wayne as he first begins his quest to rid the city of evil, and also follows a young Lieutenant James Gordon as he rises through the ranks of the Gotham City Police Department.

THE SCOOP: Fans who have been anticipating the screen adaptation of Frank Miller's epic *Batman: Year One* will have to wait just a little while longer. Production continues to move slowly, and in the wake of the announcement concerning the delay for 'Batman vs. Superman,' it's unsure when a "Year One" project could be scheduled.

However, despite the delay, pre-production on "Batman: Year One"—touted as the fifth installment of Warner Bros. "Batman" franchise—continues to steam ahead. Bo Welch, who provided set designs for such films as "Edward Scissorhands" and "Beetlejuice," recently signed on as production designer for "Year One." Meanwhile, Darren Aronofsky and Miller continue to hash out the script.



BLADE III

MAJOR PLAYERS: Wesley Snipes (Blade), David Goyer (writer) and Oliver Hirschbiegel (director)

RELEASE DATE: [illegible]

PREMISE: Born half human, half vampire, Blade walks as a man during the day and hunts vampires at night. In the third and final instalment of the "Blade" trilogy, the hero faces both human and blood-sucking foes, according to Goyer.

THE SCOOP: Originally, Goyer planned to base "Blade III" on the Richard Matheson

novel, *I Am Legend*, in which vampires rule the Earth with one lone human fighting them. But after a film based on the book was announced, Goyer backed off the idea.

"The only thing I want to say about 'Blade II' is that we are going to go back to concepts from the first 'Blade,'" Goyer tells sources. "In the first 'Blade,' there was some fun to be had, because the vampires were set in the real world. We're going to do more of that."

The writer says in "Blade III," the vampire society will "out" Blade, making him public enemy No. 1 in New York. "They turn the tables on him, so the cops and all of the humans are hunting Blade," the writer tells online sources. "They think he's crazy and that he's a monster. The vampires are doing a PR smear on him."

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

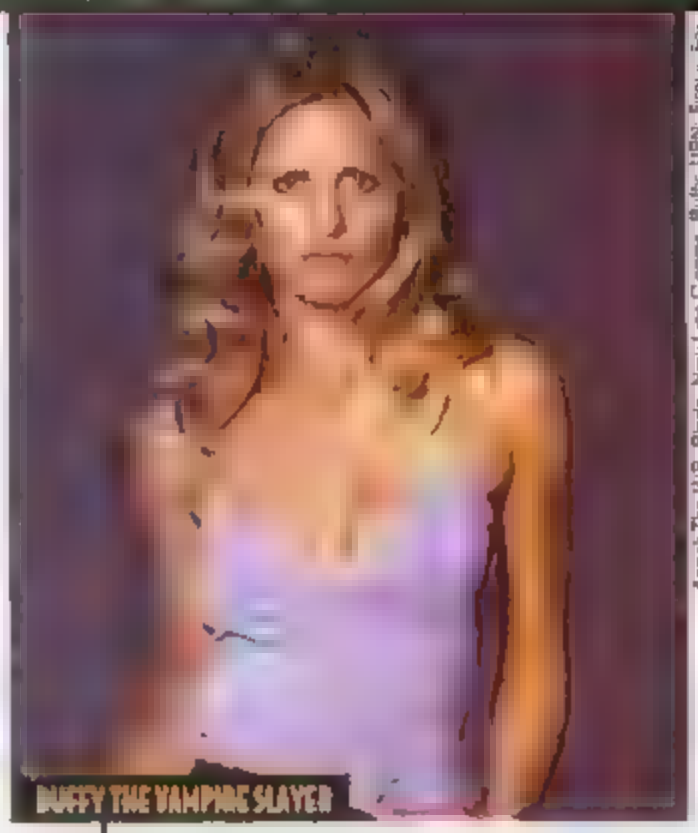
MAJOR PLAYERS: Joss Whedon (creator/writer/executive producer), Sarah Michelle Gellar (Buffy Summers), Nicholas Brendon (Xander Harris), Alyson Hannigan (Willow Rosenberg), James Marsters (Spike), Emma Caulfield (Anya Emerson), Anthony Head (Rupert Giles), Michelle Trachtenberg (Dawn Summers)

TIME SLOT: Tuesdays at 8 p.m. EST on UPN; season premiere airs on Sept. 24

PREMISE: Into each generation a Slayer is born. One girl in all the world, a Chosen One. One born with the strength and skill to fight the vampires, to stop the spread of their evil and the swell of their numbers—and for six seasons, Gellar and the cast of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" have been doing just that.

THE SCOOP: With Season Seven, rumored to be the last for Buffy and the Scoobies, look for the show to go back to its more comedic roots after two strong seasons of dark stories and darker season finales.

According to sources at UPN, Buffy will return to her newly rebuilt alma mater, Sunnydale High School, this time as an employee instead of a student, her sister Dawn will gain two new cohorts; Willow will struggle with her addiction to magic; and last year's absent Anthony Stewart Head will make at least 10 appearances as Giles. Rumor has is that Luke Perry ("Jeremiah," "Beverly Hills 90210") will reprise his role as Pyke from the "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" film for at least one episode, and that there may even be a rare appearance of rogue slayer Faith (Eliza Dushku) by the end of the season.



Angel: The WB; Blade: New Line Cinema; Buffy: UPN; Firefly: Fox

FATHOM

MAJOR PLAYERS: 20th Century Fox and Lightstorm Entertainment (studio), James Cameron and Michael Turner (executive producers), Linda Woolverton (screenwriter)

RELEASE DATE: Tentative 2004 release date projected

PREMISE: Young Aspen Matthews is found on a cruise ship previously feared lost at sea. As she grows up, Aspen painfully discovers that she's not human at all, but part of a humanoid undersea race unknown to mankind. Aspen must stop the underwater dwellers' plot to destroy the surface world in a story closely adapted from writer/artist Michael Turner's *Fathom* #1-#8 from Top Cow Productions.

THE SCOOP: "Fathom" was originally conceived for the screen as an animated film. But with James Cameron's involvement, the focus shifted to live action. Depending on script and timing, Cameron, who also directed history's highest-grossing movie in "Titanic," may also direct "Fathom."

FIREFLY

MAJOR PLAYERS: Joss Whedon (creator/writer/director/executive producer), Nathan Fillion (Captain Malcolm Reynolds), Alan Tudyk (Wash), Adam Baldwin (Jayne), Jewel Staite (Kaylee), Summer Glau (River), Sean Maher (Simon) Gina Torres (Zoe), Ron Glass (Book), Morena Baccarin (Inara), Mutant Enemy Productions and Fox Television (production companies)

TIME SLOT: Fridays at 9 p.m. on Fox; series premieres Friday, Sept. 20 at 9 p.m.

PREMISE: Taking place about 400 years in the future, "Firefly" is a science fiction/adventure series that follows the crew of the rogue ship, Serenity, and their jaunts through space. Captain Malcolm "Mal" Reynolds commands this transport ship whose crew will take any job, legal or not, in order to survive after the entire galaxy has fallen under the new alliance of all the planets. Preferring to remain below the alliance's radar, the crew flies to the barely inhabited planets on the outskirts of the universe, trying to find a new meaning in this dark and uncertain time.

THE SCOOP: Referring to the series as a "sci fi western," "Buffy the Vampire Slayer"/"Angel" mastermind Joss Whedon was inspired by the Battle of Gettysburg and the Reconstruction Era of the American Civil War when he created his new original series. Although it's science fiction, don't expect aliens and out-of-this world monsters. Whedon promises that his human creations will be scary enough. There's also buzz that

many "Buffy"/"Angel" scribes will have a hand in writing episodes of "Firefly," including Tim Minear, who's best known for his work on "Angel."

HELLBOY

MAJOR PLAYERS: Guillermo del Toro (screenwriter/director), Ron Perlman (Hellboy), Sony Pictures Entertainment and Revolution Studios (studio)

RELEASE DATE: Slated to hit in mid-2004

PREMISE: In the final days of World War II, the Nazis summoned a young demon to Earth to aid their cause. Allied forces interrupted the summoning, and the Hellboy grew up on a U.S. military base, where he learned to fight for good rather than evil.

"Hellboy"—currently having locations scouted in Prague to begin shooting in March—will closely adapt *Hellboy: Seed of Destruction*, the initial comic mini-series written and drawn by creator Mike Mignola. Mignola, who did extensive design work for Disney's "Atlantis," is a close adviser in every step of production.

THE SCOOP: Guillermo del Toro, who directed "Blade 2," is a huge comic fan who counts Robert Crumb, Richard Corben, Will Eisner, Alan Moore and Moebius among his influences. "But I love Jack Kirby," he says, "He's my greatest weakness. Anything that Jack Kirby drew—just *anything*—was so powerful that I become entranced."

HE-MAN AND THE MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE

MAJOR PLAYERS: Cartoon Network, Bill Schultz (executive producer), Mike Young Productions

TIME SLOT: Fridays at 5 p.m.; weekdays after Nov. 11, 5 p.m.

PREMISE: Another '80s icon invades Toonami. Based on one of the most successful children's properties of all time, the brand-new "He-Man and the Masters of the Universe" cartoon follows the most powerful man in the universe's crusade to defend the mystical world of Eternia from the clutches of the sorcerer Skeletor and his malevolent minions.

THE SCOOP: Similar to "Transformers," the "He-Man" cartoon will tie into an all-new, high-profile toy line and comic book series courtesy of MV Creations. Published through Image, the new comic kicks off in November with a four-issue mini-series closely based on the 90-minute "Origin of He-Man" movie. An ongoing, self-contained series will follow immediately after.

THE HULK

MAJOR PLAYERS: Eric Bana (Bruce Banner/Hulk), Jennifer Connelly (Betty Ross), Sam Elliot (Gen. Thunderbolt Ross), Nick Nolte (Banner's father), Ang Lee (director), James Schamus (writer and co-producer), Stan Lee (co-executive producer), Kevin Feige (co-executive producer), Avi Arad (co-producer), Gale Anne Hurd (co-producer), Larry Franco (co-producer), Dennis Muren and Industrial Light & Magic (visual effects), Universal Pictures (production studio)

RELEASE DATE: June 20, 2003

PREMISE: After a scientific experiment goes awry, Dr. Bruce Banner inadvertently takes on a genetic trait that transforms him from a scrawny intellectual into a mindless rampaging monster known as the Hulk. Naturally, a 700-lb., 10-foot-tall monster would be of some concern to our national security, and General "Thunderbolt" Ross leads the army to destroy the Green Goliath. It's up to Banner's girlfriend and Ross' daughter Betty Ross, to save the misunderstood monster.

THE SCOOP: Filming of the "Hulk" movie wrapped up late last August with post-production beginning almost immediately. Eight-time Academy Award-winning visual effects artist Dennis Muren ("Star Wars Episode I," "Jurassic Park") and his team at Industrial Light & Magic are currently working on the CG designs for the "Hulk."

As for the rampant rumors that have plagued the filming of "Hulk," many have been exposed as being false. There will be no appearance by the Absorbing Man, no cameo by She-Hulk, and despite reports that say other

CROSSGEN

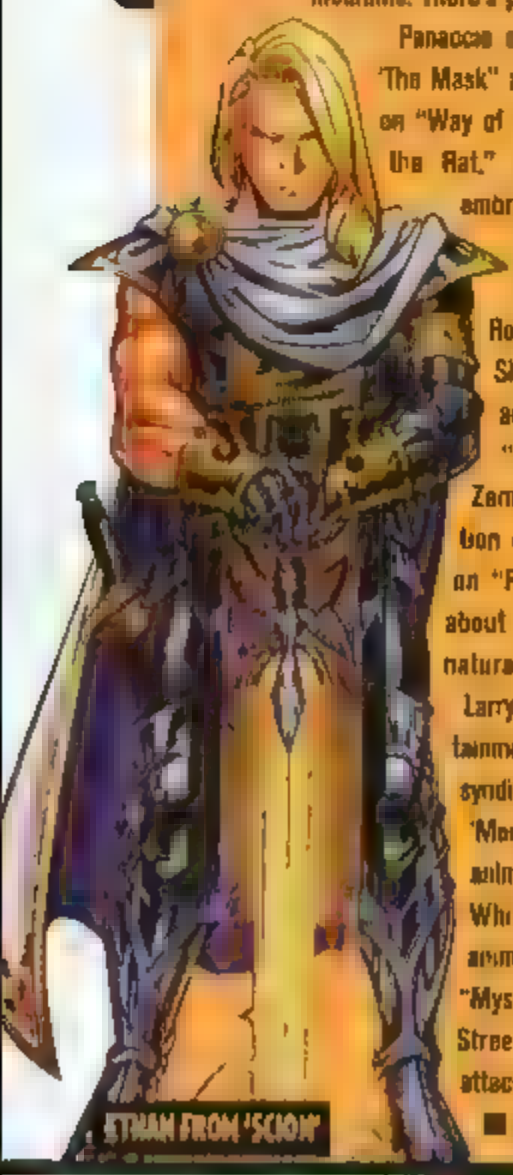
To drop a bit of Hollywood lingo, CrossGen's taking the fast track when it comes to its movie properties.

Consider this: It took almost 40 years to see a "Spider-Man" film. It took about the same to see the first big-budget "Superman" and "Batman" films.

But if CrossGen Comics continues on its current course, the Tampa-based publisher's fans won't have to wait nearly as long for the first CrossGen-inspired film.

According to CrossGen's Vice President of Product Development Tony Panaccio, the company already has five projects set up in Hollywood, but has no plans on stopping there.

"We've always known that the CrossGen Universe was perfect to cross over to television and film," says Panaccio. "This is only the beginning of our relationship with those mediums. There's plenty more to come."

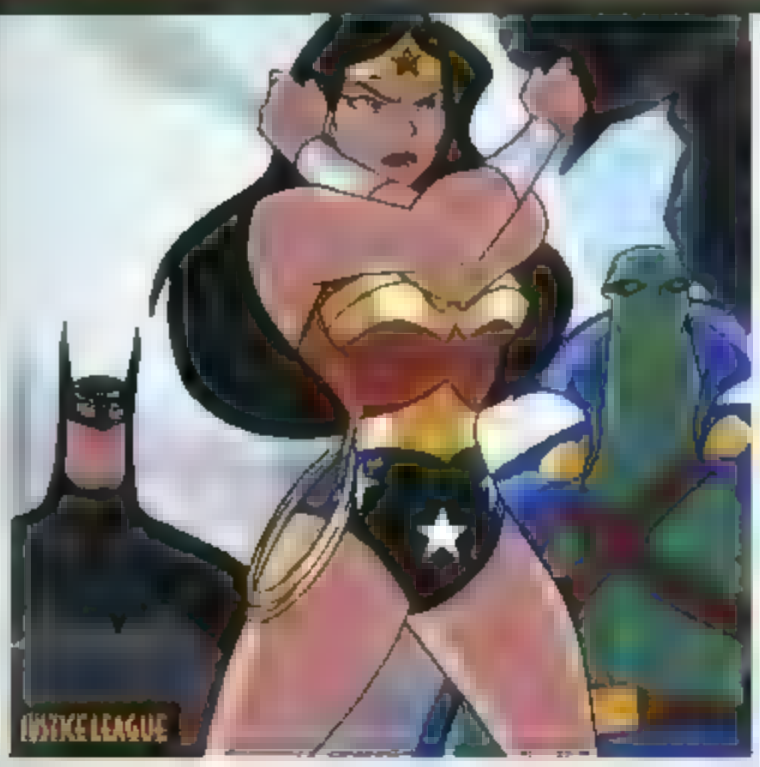

ETHAN FROM 'SCION'

Panaccio says Chuck Russell, director of "The Mask" and "Scorpion King," is working on "Way of the Rat" and "Scion." "Way of the Rat," about a thief who becomes embroiled in a mystical conspiracy of martial arts and sorcery, is being developed through Castle Rock and will be written by "The Shawshank Redemption" scribe and director Frank Darabont.

"Forrest Gump" director Robert Zemeckis' Image Movers production company is currently working on "Route 666," CGE's horror title about a girl on the run from supernatural forces.

Larry Kasanoff of Threshold Entertainment is planning "Sigil" as a syndicated television series, while "Meridian" is in development as an animated movie directed by Larry Whitaker, a former Disney CG animator. Also in development is "Mystic," which "Nightmare on Elm Street" director Wes Craven is attached to develop for film.

■ *MIKE COTTON*



wise, the cast and crew have been having a great time on the set, and the film is currently just slightly over budget. However, one rumor which is true and that has caused Hulk fanboys the most strife would have to be the addition of "Hulk dogs" on the set, yet Lee is quick to assure fans that they won't be offended by the gamma ray K-9s, and they will serve a purpose in the film.

Trust him, it's Ang-friggin'-Lee we're talkin' about here!

JUSTICE LEAGUE

MAJOR PLAYERS: Cartoon Network, Bruce Timm (executive producer/writer)

TIME SLOT: Fridays 7 p.m., Saturdays 9:30 p.m., Sundays 7 p.m.; season premieres Oct. 4

PREMISE: The Man of Steel and the Dark Knight team up with the Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkgirl, Martian Manhunter and Wonder Woman to form the ultimate superteam, the Justice League. Based in their orbiting space station known as the Watchtower, this Magnificent Seven set aside their differences in order to defend the Earth from any and every threat.

THE SCOOP: The season debut kicks off with special guest star, Rex Mason, a.k.a. Metamorpho. While on duty, Green Lantern reunites with Mason, a former Marine buddy and successful chemical company executive. But when Mason is exposed to an experimental mutagen, he is transformed into a hideous monster. Enraged and blaming his friend for his condition, Mason sets his vengeful sights on GL.

In other upcoming episodes, look for appearances by villains like Solomon Grundy, the immortal Vandal Savage and the long-awaited return of the cosmic despot known as Darkseid, Lord of Apokolips. New menaces showing up to terrorize the League include Dr. Destiny and Eclipso.

And of course, the King of Seven Seas, Aquaman, will reappear to lend a hand.

LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN

MAJOR PLAYERS: Stephen Norrington (director), Sean Connery (Allan Quatermain), Stuart Townsend (Dorian Gray), Peta Wilson (Mina Harker), Max Ryan (Dante Alighieri), Shane West (Tom Sawyer) Tony Curran (The Invisible Man), Jason Flemyng (Dr. Henry Jekyll/Mr. Hyde), Jason Isaacs (Campion Bond), Naseeruddin Shah (Captain Nemo)

RELEASE DATE: June 6, 2003

PREMISE: "League of Extraordinary Gentlemen" won't be a direct translation of Alan Moore's mini-series, but it will keep the spirit of the highly acclaimed work. Six Victorian Age adventurers, including *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*'s Captain Nemo, *Dracula*'s Mina Harker and Tom Sawyer, band together to stop The Fantom, who plans on sparking a war between the European countries. The League is formed by British Intelligence and Sawyer joins because he's convinced the Fantom murdered his former partner and lifelong friend, Huck Finn.

THE SCOOP: "League" production was halted in August due to massive flooding in the Czech Republic, notably Prague, the city where filming was taking place. The floods killed over 100 people and caused upwards of $2 billion in damages, including many of the exterior sets for the film and the entire Nautilus set. In fact, the stars and crew were evacuated out of the city when the flooding grew out of control, and production was shifted to Malta so filming could continue.

But natural disasters weren't the only bugaboos producers had to face. While early critiques of the script for "League" complained that the story was too "Americanized" in terms of locales and period slang, recent reports have surfaced that the film now primarily takes place in the U.K. with Tom Sawyer's character cut back from a leading man to a supporting role. Also, look for one member of the League to turn out to be a traitor by the end of the film.

SMALLVILLE

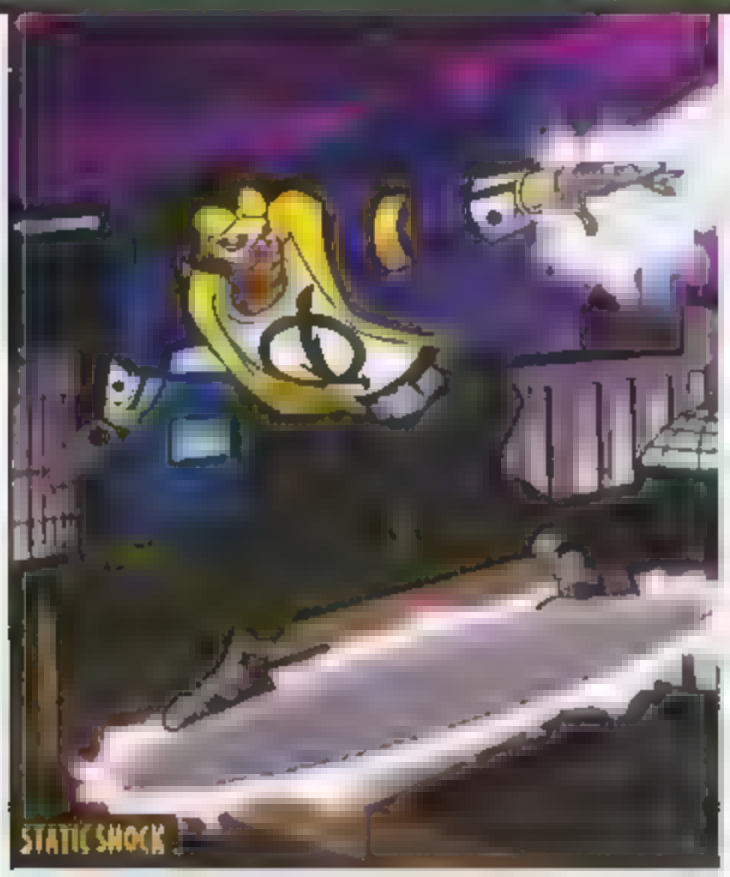
MAJOR PLAYERS: Miles Millar and Alfred Gough (creators/executive producers), Tom Welling (Clark Kent), Kristin Kreuk (Lana Lang), Michael Rosenbaum (Lex Luthor), Sam Jones III (Pete Ross), Allison Mack (Chloe Sullivan), Annette O'Toole (Martha Kent), John Schneider (Jonathan Kent)

TIME SLOT: Tuesdays at 9 p.m. on the WB, season premieres on Sept. 24

PREMISE: A teenage Clark Kent lives in Smallville, Kan., where his upstanding parents, Jonathan and Martha Kent, attempt to ingrain him with their Midwestern values. But while dealing with everyday teen problems like girls and schoolwork, Clark must also learn to use his superpowers responsibly in an effort to one day become the Man of Steel.

THE SCOOP: "Smallville" Season Two will pick up where Season One ended, according to Millar and Gough, with Smallville and its residents dealing with the aftermath of a devastating tornado. According to sources, Lex Luthor will discover that his father has been paralyzed during the tornado and steps up to run Luthor Corp. in his absence. Also, look for some new characters to appear that will dramatically effect Lana's life just as she and Clark grow closer towards the end of the season.

Season Two will also see one of Clark's closest friends learn the secret of his Kryptonian origin, which will lead to more prankish behavior by Clark as he learns to have fun with his growing powers. Clark will develop at least one new superpower that, according to Gough, "you've seen before but might not have realized was a power."



SPIDER-MAN II

MAJOR PLAYERS: Sam Raimi (director), Tobey Maguire (Peter Parker/Spider-Man), Kirsten Dunst (Mary Jane Watson), James Franco (Harry Osborn), Miles Millar, Alfred Gough, David Koepp (writers)

RELEASE DATE: May 2004

PREMISE: Peter Parker's bitten by a genetically altered spider, giving him all the abilities of an arachnid, powers which he uses to live up to his uncle's dying words: "With great power comes great responsibility."

THE SCOOP: Reportedly, the sequel will catch up with Peter, MJ and Harry Osborn after their first year of college. "Smallville" creators Millar and Gough were tapped to write the sequel before the first film even opened. But after the $400-plus million success of the first film, "Spider-Man" screenwriter David Koepp decided to take a first pass at scripting the sequel.

While everyone from Raimi on down is sworn to secrecy about the plot and villains of "Spider-Man 2," rumor has it Koepp's version of the script uses Dr. Octopus as the main villain. And circulating throughout the rumor mill is that Christopher Walken ("Suicide Kings") could be up for the part of Doc Ock.

SPIDER-MAN: TAS

MAJOR PLAYERS: Brian Michael Bendis (writer), Neil Patrick Harris (Peter Parker/Spider-Man), Lisa Loeb (Mary Jane Watson), Ian Ziering (Harry Osborn)

RELEASE DATE: First quarter 2003 on MTV

TIME SLOT: TBD

PREMISE: The new "Spider-Man: Animated" series for MTV will pick up right where the first "Spider-Man" film left off, with Harry, Peter and MJ in their first year of college. Look for villains such as Doc Ock, Sandman and the Lizard to show up, along with some original villains handmade for Spider-Man's first fully-CGI outing.

THE SCOOP: *Ultimate Spider-Man* scribe Brian Michael Bendis was tapped by Sony to executive produce and story-edit most of the first season of "Spider-Man: Animated" because the company wanted the same feel of his comic book work on MTV.

STATIC SHOCK

MAJOR PLAYERS: Denys Cowan (co-creator of the original comic/producer), Swinton Scott (producer), Alan Burnett (supervising producer), Warner Bros. Animation

TIME SLOT: Saturday mornings on Kids' WB! (check local listings); TBD

PREMISE: Virgil Hawkins, a 14-year-old African-American boy, gains the ability to control electromagnetic energy after being exposed to a mysterious gas in his hometown, Dakota City. As Static, Virgil fights those who use their newfound powers for selfish ends, and confronts real-life issues such as racism, gun violence and gangs.

THE SCOOP: In this third season of 13 original episodes, Virgil faces off against the city's newest and most dangerous supervillains. Thankfully, help's on the way as his friend Richie develops powers of his own. And keep your eyes peeled for a few guest appearances from some infamous Milestone superheroes. All this, while Virgil desperately struggles to maintain his secret identify and keep his family safe. Oh yeah—the Justice League will appear, too!

SUPERMAN

MAJOR PLAYERS: McG (director), J.J. Abrams (writer), Jon Peters (producer), Warner Bros. (studio)

RELEASE DATE: TBD

PREMISE: The sole survivor of the doomed planet Krypton, Superman uses an arsenal of powers including super-strength, flight, heat vision and invulnerability to fight a never-ending crusade for truth, justice and the American way.

THE SCOOP: According to sources close to Warner Bros., "Superman" continues to move slowly along. It was thought that preproduction would be put on hold until after the "Batman vs. Superman" feature had been completed, but with the news that director Wolfgang Petersen will opt for another project before "BVS," that plan has been shelved, and things proceed forward.

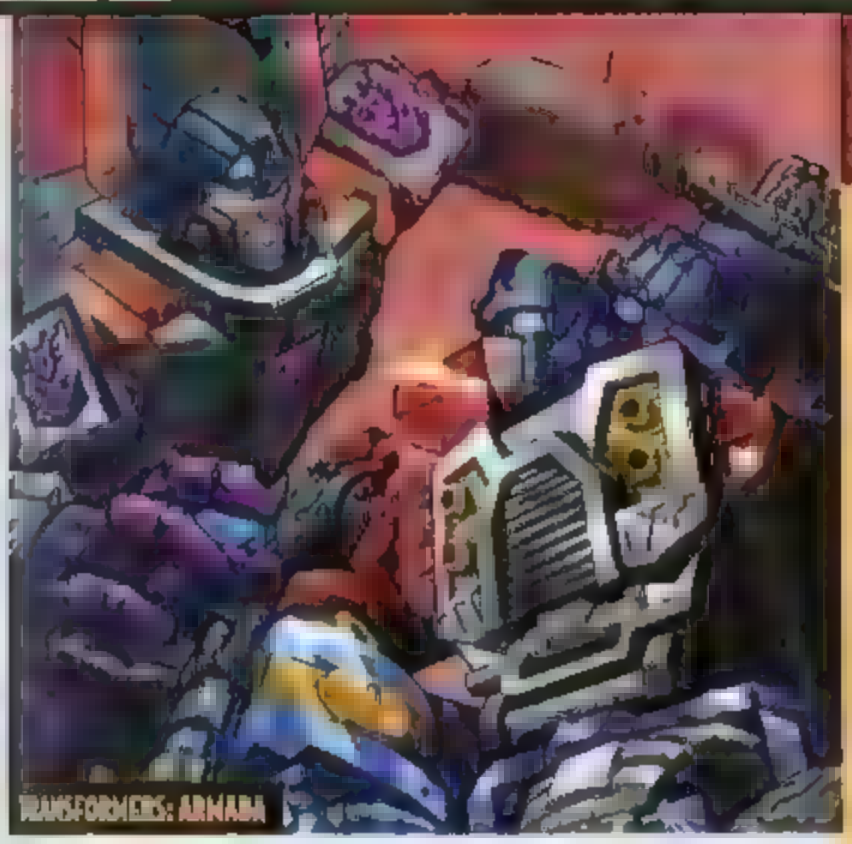
One sign of life has been surfaced recently as Warner Bros. signed "Alias" creator J.J. Abrams as the screenwriter. But the search continues for a director, as McG ("Charlie's Angels,") the preliminary helmer, may be facing a scheduling conflict. Other directors in the mix include David Fincher, Michael Mann, Rob Bowman and Steven Soderbergh.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

MAJOR PLAYERS: 4Kids Productions, Fox (network)

TIME SLOT: Saturdays at 10 a.m.

PREMISE: Everyone's favorite heroes in a half shell, Leonardo, Michaelangelo, Donatello and Raphael, are slated to make a cartoon comeback. Part of Fox Kids' new "Fox Box" lineup, the new Turtles 'toon debuts with 26 episodes and will feature all the wit and attitude of the original series, minus the camp. "We're borrowing straight from the original comic series by Mirage," explains 4Kids Productions' Josh Izzo. "This is a real action show—all that corniness is going to be replaced by 99 percent ninjitsu action." The show's look will also receive an edgier update, reminiscent of modern action 'toons such as "Batman Beyond." Old-school fans can expect to see such familiar faces as the vigilante Casey Jones, mad scientist Baxter Stockman and his robotic



mousers, as well as hottie reporter April O'Neil.

THE SCOOP: The Fab Four's new 'toon is just the first wave in an all-out Turtle renaissance (Ha—get it!) that will include a new toy line, collectibles by Playmates and an all-new full-color comic series.

TRANSFORMERS: ARMADA

MAJOR PLAYERS: Cartoon Network

TIME SLOT: Airing now on Fridays at 5:30 p.m., weekdays after Nov. 11 at 5:30 p.m.

PREMISE: "Armada" provides Transfans with yet another reinvention of the Transformers mythos. Cartoon Network will air 52 episodes of this new series, which chronicles a new war between the feuding Autobots and Decepticons. But this time the object of their dispute isn't Cybertron or Energon—it's a new sub-tribe of Transformers known as the Mini-Cons. The Mini-Cons are a micro-sized race of transforming robots with the ability to attach to other Transformers, enhancing their powers and abilities. Enter Alexa, Carlos and Rad—three everyday Earth kids who inadvertently reawaken the dormant Mini-Cons, which alerts both the Autobots and Decepticons who come to Earth in search of the little buggers.

THE SCOOP: This new Transtoon is the final vehicle in an Armada convoy that also includes a toy line and ongoing comic series from Dreamwave.

X-MEN: EVOLUTION

MAJOR PLAYERS: Marvel Studios

RELEASE DATE: Fall 2002

TIME SLOT: Check local listings

PREMISE: A group of mutant superheroes, the X-Men (teenaged versions in this cartoon edition) go to regular public school, but train in the use of their powers at Charles Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters. There, a trio of older mutants, including Wolverine, Storm and Beast, serve as instructors.

THE SCOOP: After last season saw the school's students "outed" as mutants, this season will focus on the ramifications of that event, along with the appearance of the Morlocks and some new villains. "Apocalypse will be a big part of Season Three," says Marvel Studios' Executive of Creative Affairs Craig Kyle. "Expect to see a lot more of him as the season progresses."

Wizard Staffers Mike Cotton, Dave Marshall, James McDonough, Jim McLauchlin, Casey Seijas and Andy Serwin expensed over $3,419 in popcorn—minus the butter-flavored topping—while researching this feature.

SHORT TAKES

Hey movie lovers, there's loads of other comic-based projects hitting screens in the coming months, but we didn't have room to blow 'em out. Here's a quick recap of some other flicks coming down the pipeline!

THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF KAVALIER & CLAY Based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Michael Chabon, "Kavalier & Clay" tells the story of two Jewish comic book creators dealing with success and inner demons during the Golden Age of comics.

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR Loosely based on the Dark Horse mini-series of the same name, this flick will see a twisted scientist breeding Aliens in an attempt to attract Predators for study, as the galaxy's two deadliest species finally go toe to toe.

MEOW—ASHLEY JUDD AS CATWOMAN?

CATWOMAN Patience Price (Ashley Judd), a woman who survives a murder attempt, gets a second chance for revenge and returns as Catwoman. Production has come to a tentative halt, as screenwriter John Rogers continues to put the final touches on the script. Meanwhile, the studio has also confirmed that French director Pitof ("Alien: Resurrection") will helm the film once production begins.

CONSTANTINE This film version of DC/Vertigo's *Hellblazer* comic will be updated to have Constantine as an American (possibly played by Keanu Reeves) living over a bowling alley and getting caught up in the supernatural.

FANTASTIC FOUR According to Marvel Studios President Avi Arad, his first choice to play the FF's leader Reed Richards is George Clooney. "He would be perfect for this film," says Arad. "It'll be a huge, action-adventure—maybe our biggest film ever." Sources at Marvel say the film could begin filming as early as March 2003.

GHOST RIDER The "Blade" duo of scribe David Goyer and director Stephen Norrington re-team for "Ghost Rider," planned to begin filming in late 2002. According to early script reviews, Johnny Blaze (with Nicolas Cage attached) makes a deal with a Native American spirit to save his dying girlfriend after a motorcycle accident, but the trickster demon double crosses Blaze and curses him with a demon of his own.

IRON FIST Planned as a big-budget kung-fu epic from Artisan, "Iron Fist" has been in development with Ray Park attached since "X-Men" opened in 2001. Originally planned to be directed by Kirk Wong, "Iron Fist" is at a standstill now, waiting for another director to emerge.

PUNISHER Marvel's gun-toting vigilante has been optioned by Artisan, with screenwriter Jonathan Hensleigh ("Die Hard with a Vengeance") attached to pen and make his directorial debut. The storyline reportedly mirrors the comic work of Garth Ennis, and WWE superstar The Rock has been rumored for the lead.

SUB-MARINER According to screenwriter David Self ("Road to Perdition"), he sees the story of Namor—a half-human, half Atlantean hybrid—as a trilogy of films, possibly like "Lord of the Rings": Namor discovering his heritage, Namor the Avenging Son and Namor, King of Atlantis.

30 DAYS OF NIGHT "Spider-Man" director Sam Raimi's production company has purchased the film rights to this IDW Publishing mini-series, about a horde of vampires who descend on an Alaskan town during a month-long darkness.

WITCHBLADE The second season of "Witchblade" recently wrapped, but it has been a ratings sensation for TNT for two straight seasons, so don't be surprised to see Ms. Pezzini polish up the 'Blade for a third season in summer 2003.

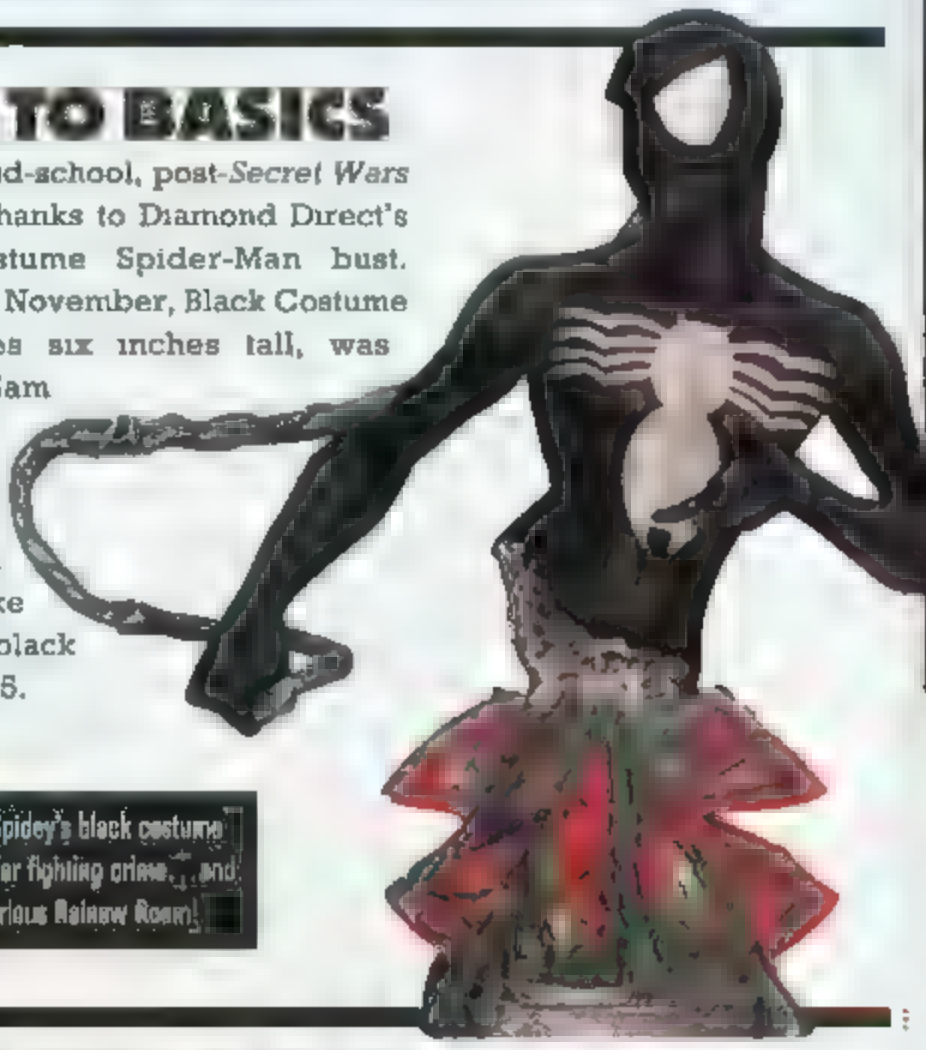
stuff

COMIC BOOK MERCHANDISE YOU CAN BUY...

YO! Are you a company who sells stuff cool enough to make the grade here? Let us be the judges of that. Send any info/samples to: Stuff for "Stuff," c/o Wizard Entertainment, 151 Wells Avenue, Congers, NY 10920-2064. And check your local stores for availability of all these products, or ask your retailer to order 'em for you!

BLACK TO BASICS

Spidey's going old-school, post-*Secret Wars* black costume, thanks to Diamond Direct's new Black Costume Spider-Man bust. Hitting shelves in November, Black Costume Spidey measures six inches tall, was sculpted by Sam Greenwell, and is limited to just 5,000 pieces. And the best part? You can take home this basic black beauty for just $45.



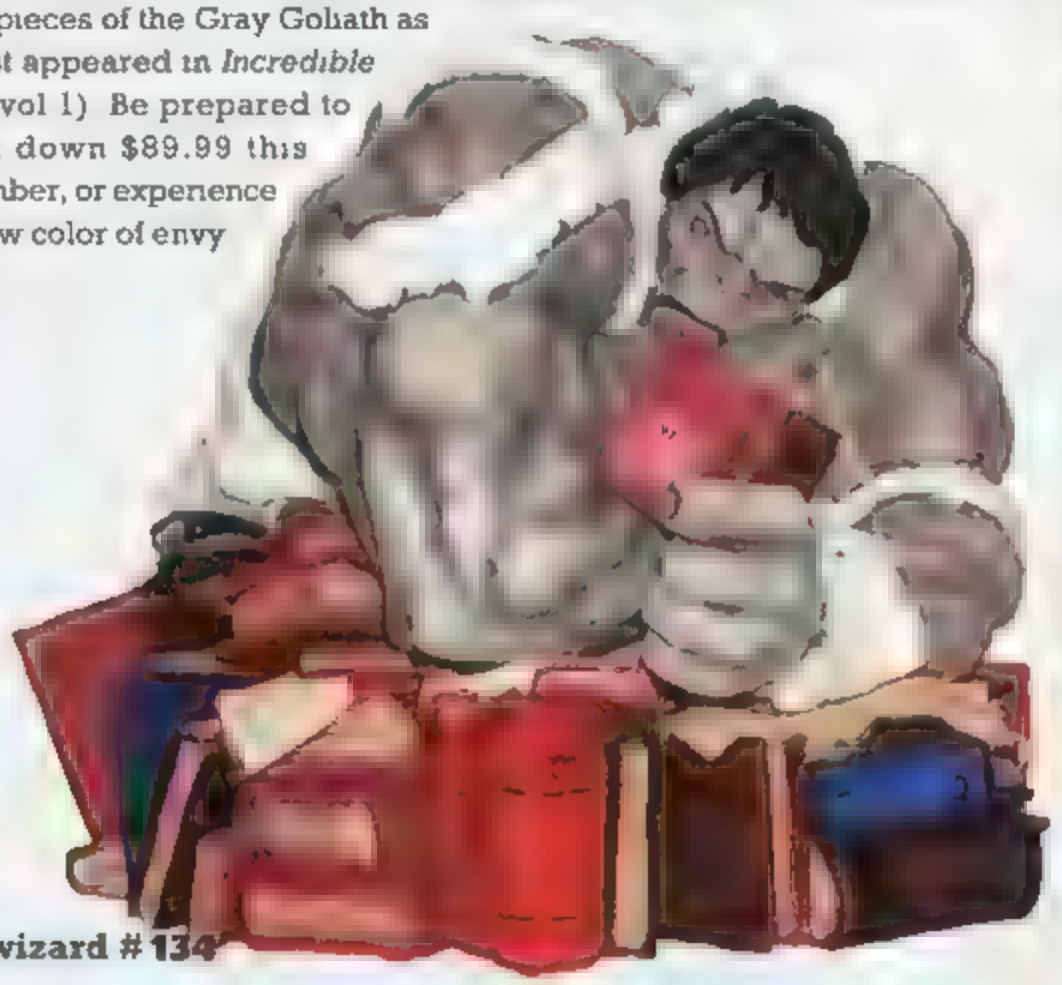
MORE MORE BLACK Spidey's black costume is the perfect ensemble for fighting crime... and having dinner at the luxurious Rainew Room!

PRAY FOR THE DAWN

While you can't buy love, Joseph Michael Linsner's lovely Dawn can be purchased with Diamond Select's new resin statue. Sculptor Andy Berkholtz captures all the curves and folds of Linsner's luscious design, even at 8" tall. She's all yours this November for only $85, along with a hand-numbered, full-color Certificate of Authenticity.

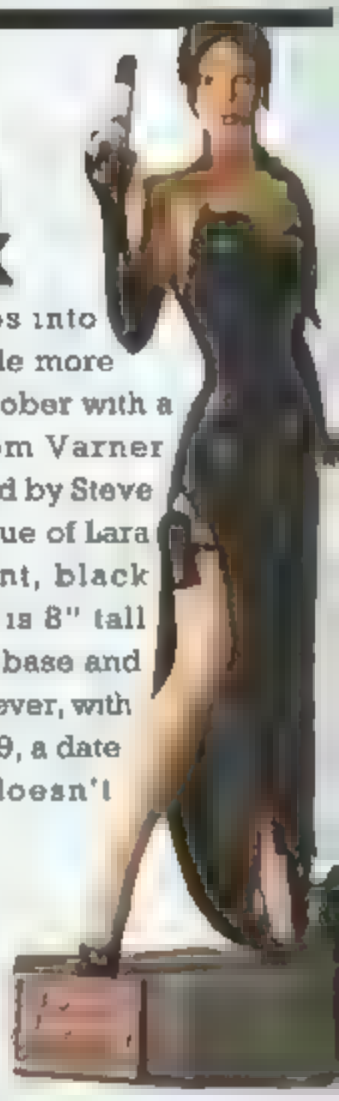
GRAY WITH ENVY

This bust celebrates a time when Hulk was just as mean, just not as green. Sculptor Howard Kalish and designer Juan Bobillo distilled classic Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko images into 8" inches of primal rage. In honor of the Hulk's 40th anniversary, Dynamic Forces (**www.dynamicforces.com**) will produce only 1,962 pieces of the Gray Goliath as he first appeared in *Incredible Hulk* (vol 1). Be prepared to plunk down $89.99 this December, or experience the new color of envy.



THE BABE WORE BLACK

Lara Croft slips into something a little more elegant this October with a new statue from Varner Studios. Sculpted by Steve Varner, this statue of Lara in an iridescent, black evening gown is 8" tall with a sculpted base and nameplate. However, with a price tag of $99, a date with this gal doesn't come cheap.



RECRUITING DRIVE

G.I. Joe wants you—to buy this lithograph from Dynamic Forces! Artist J. Scott Campbell (*Danger Girl*) serves up his interpretation of the classic image from *G.I. Joe* (vol. 1) #1 for this litho, which measures 18" by 24" and comes on 100-lb. Gallery art silk stock. The G.I. Joe Premiere Litho comes in two editions: regular for $19.99 and signed by Campbell for $49.99.

SHOOT TO THRILL

Who hasn't wanted to strap on Spidey's web-shooters and go traipsing through Manhattan? Well, Diamond Select offers up the next best thing with its Spider-Man Web-Shooters Replica, swinging into stores come November for $120. The first release in a line of life-sized replicas, the web-shooters are cast in pewter and feature removable web-fluid cartridges. But don't try swooping off the Empire State Building with these bad boys; they're meant for display only!

HOTSTUFF!!!

BOWEN DESIGNS BLOW OUT!

This fall's looking like a boom time for Bowen Designs, which has seven kick-ass collectibles hitting shelves in October and November. All of these pieces were designed and sculpted by master artist Randy Bowen (except the Phoenix two-pack, which was sculpted by Mark Newman), and all of them can be purchased through the company's Website at **www.bowendesigns.com**. Take a look, and start making some room on the credit cards!

FANTASTIC FOUR THREE-PACK
Invisible Woman, Human Torch and Mr. Fantastic $115 (Ships October 2002)
BUCKY MINI-BUST $35
(Ships November 2002)
MR. SINISTER BUST $55
(Ships November 2002)
PHOENIX TWO-PACK
$80 (Ships November 2002)

stuff

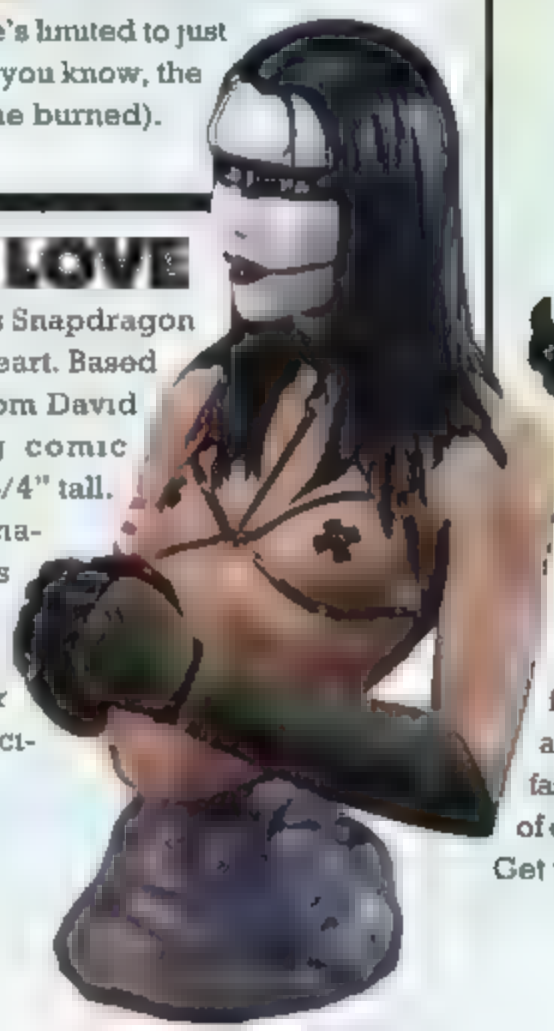
DELUXE DYNAMIC DUO

The Silver Age never looked so good, as DC Direct unveils a deluxe two-pack of Classic Batman and Robin Action Figures! Hitting stores on Feb. 12, 2003, the Deluxe Silver Age Batman and Robin figures each sport 11 points of articulation and come with Batarangs, Batrope with suction cup and display base in the shape of a Gotham City rooftop. Retailers will determine pricing, but keep your eyes peeled for the Bat-signal so you'll know when they're in stores.

WHEN IN ROME

Tell me son: Do you like gladiator movies? Well, if you liked "Gladiator," then Nitro Comics and Factory X have got the collectible for you. Check out this 9" statue of Maximus, the Roman general turned gladiator from the Oscar winning flick! Officially licensed by Dreamworks and Universal Studios and produced by Factory X exclusively for Nitro Comics, the Maximus statue is available now for $114.95 through Nitro's Website at **www.nitrocomics.com**. But you better hurry—the statue's limited to just 1,500, so don't pull a Nero (you know, the guy who fiddled while Rome burned).

MOORE TO LOVE



Don't get distracted or this Snapdragon will steal more than your heart. Based on the deadly assassin from David Mack's award-winning comic *Kabuki*, this bust stands 4 3/4" tall. Clayburn Moore's appreciation for the female form is obvious in this scantily clad sculpture of the deadly beauty. Fork over $45 this October to appreciate it for yourself.

G-FORCE UNMASKED

When he's not leading G-Force in the battle against evil, Mark sets out on a task nearly as heroic: delivering the mail. A new 6" tall figure of Mark from Diamond Select shows what Mark looks like at his day job. Sculpted by Gabriel Marquez, the figure includes a variant "helmet-less" head sculpt, a PVC of his airmail plane and of course, his trademark Sonic Boomerang. Pick it up this October for $10.99 and make your first step towards becoming the post-master!

BAD GETS BIGGER

What the Abomination lacks in dental hygiene, he makes up for in size, as can plainly be seen in this new "Big" bust from Dynamic Forces. Measuring 9" tall, 9" front to back and 12" wide, this bust can eat most other busts for breakfast. With only 750 being produced, this super-limited edition of one of the Hulk's ugliest enemies won't stick around long. Get yours this December for $149.99—floss not included.

CHASIN' AWAY THE BLUES

Relive the magic of the Silver Age with an 8" resin statue of the Beast, the second in a series of statues paying tribute to the classic X-tales by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. A letter accompanies the base of each statue in order to spell "X-Men" when displayed together. The Beast comes with an attachable letter "X." Only 3,000 pieces will be available worldwide, so grab one for $75 this November. Diamond Select will release a new statue every other month until the set is complete.

RING-A-DING-DING!

That ain't the dinner bell, fanboys! That's the alert signal to let you know that DC Direct's releasing three brand-new Green Lantern Corps figures, and they're all hitting stores on Feb. 19, 2003! Be on the lookout for an all-new Hal Jordan figure, resculpted to give him his classic Silver Age look, as well as figures of the flame-wielding villain called Effigy and the Rambo-esque bad boy named Guy Gardner. All three figures stand at least 6 1/4" tall, and the two GLs include one-size-fits-all Power Rings for the buyer! Retailers determine pricing, so keep your green handy.

video game

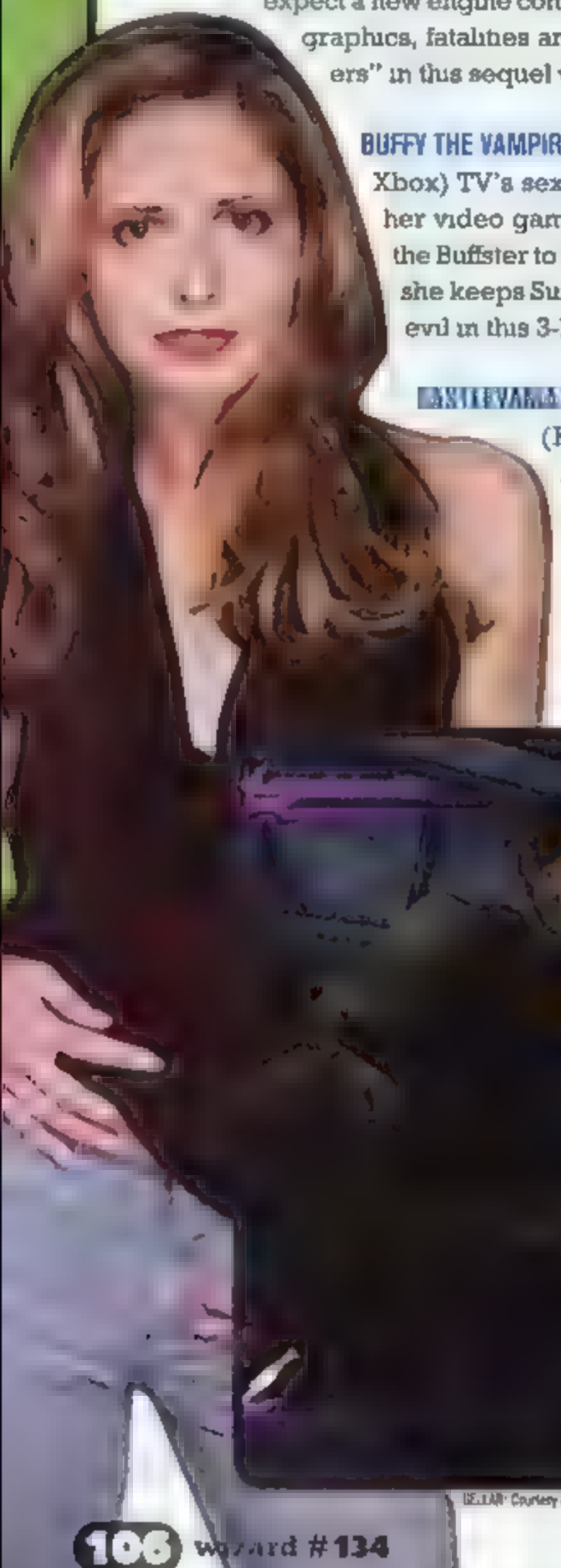
STUFF

GET YOUR FREAK ON!

Horror games turn up the terror just in time for Halloween

Lookin' to scare yourself silly? Whether you're in the mood to hack up vampires, use zombies for target practice or just run in terror from horrifying aliens, this Halloween's video game lineup promises something for every wuss Mary.

BLADE II (Activision; PS2, Xbox) Marvel's badass vampire slayer is back and ready to take a bite out of the undead. Promising to make up for Blade's disappointing debut on PlayStation, expect a new engine complete with gut-wrenching graphics, fatalities and enhanced "Rage Powers" in this sequel with fangs.



BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER (Electronic Arts; Xbox) TV's sexiest slayer finally makes her video game debut. Take control of the Buffster to kick some undead butt as she keeps Sunnydale safe from unholy evil in this 3-D action adventure.

CASTLEVANIA: HARMONY OF DISSONANCE (Konami; Game Boy Advance) 2-D gaming refuses to die. This latest gothic adventure pushes the GBA to its limits, providing some of the most impressive visuals ever seen on the system.

ETERNAL DARKNESS: SANITY'S REQUIEM (Nintendo; GAMECUBE) The big N's first foray into the world of virtual horror has to be experienced to be believed. Taking on the role of 13, century-spanning protagonists bound by fate, courageous gamers must thwart the evil Ancients' return to Earth.

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 3 (Sega; Xbox) Lock and load—it's zombie-blasting time. Fans can expect all the series' trademark, lightning-fast shoot-'em action, branching paths and gratuitous gore as they explore a hellish postapocalyptic future chock full of zombies and hordes upon hordes of other horrific monstrosities

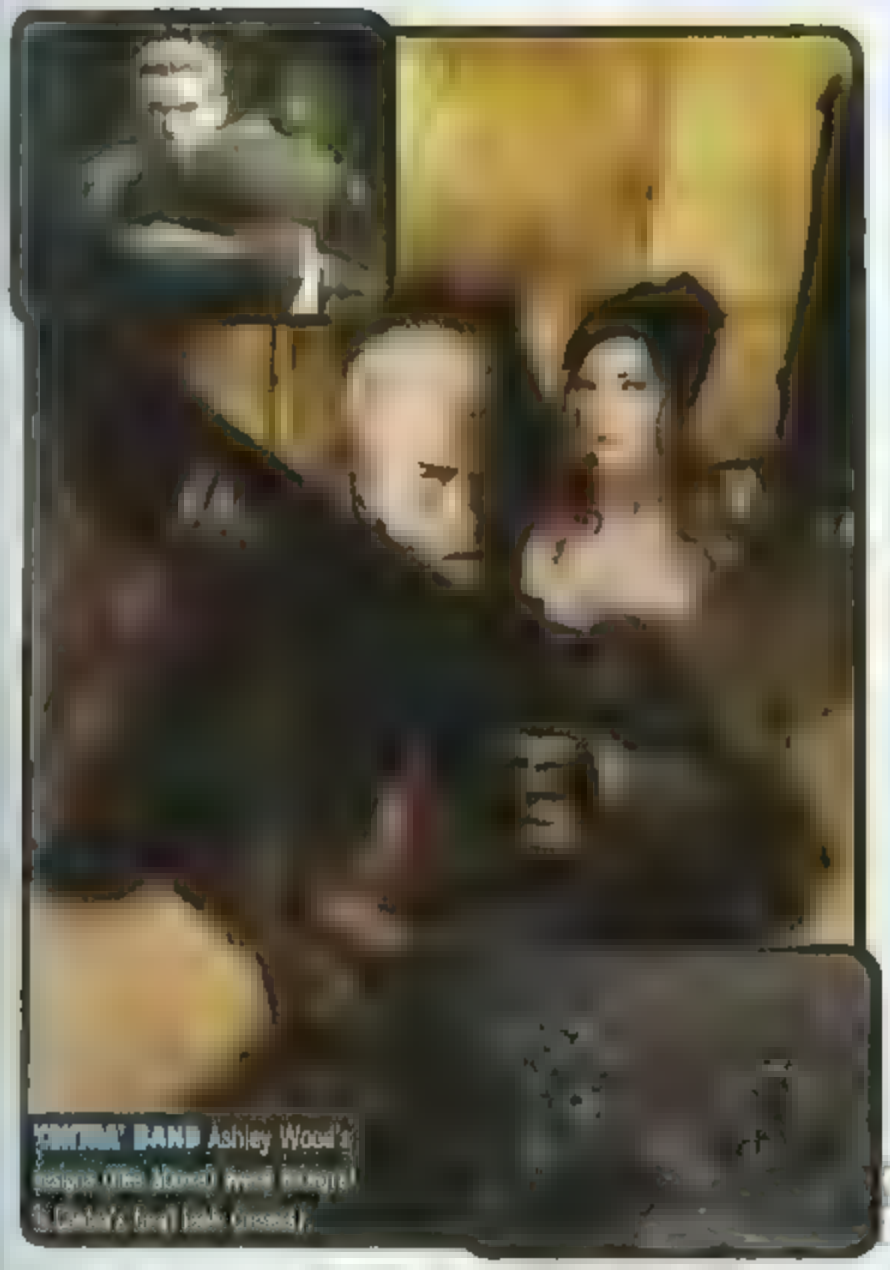
RESIDENT EVIL ZERO (Capcom; GAMECUBE) It's double your terror, double the fun when gamers have to take on the insane challenge of keeping two characters alive simultaneously

SUPER GHOULS AND GHOSTS II (Capcom; PS2) The old school is back with vengeance. Join Sir Arthur as he takes on the Devil himself in order to save his fair lady in one of the most difficult 2-D side-scrollers ever.

THE THING (Universal; PS2, Xbox) Are they friends or foes? Figuring out who you can trust and who wants to eat you for lunch is one of the many challenges of this ambitious title based on John Carpenter's cult classic remake. Taking full advantage of its M rating, this game promises to make gamers squeamish with its intense gore, frightening aliens and intense psychological terror. ■ JAMES McDONOUGH

HIGH STAKES Sarah Michelle Gellar's Buffy (left) stars in her own video game.

©LAN Courtesy UPN



'CONTRA' BAND Ashley Wood's [illegible] (Claire's final look pictured).

THE 'CONTRA' AFFAIR

Comic artist helps jumpstart a classic

Contra: Shattered Soldiers (PS2) is a sequel to one of the most beloved video game franchises of all time, but this time it's getting a facelift—with the help of a comic book artist.

Ashley Wood, whose unique stylings have graced the covers of such titles as *Hellspawn*, *Sam and Twitch* and *30 Days of Night*, was tapped to help redesign the Konami sequel that gamers have clamored for since the release of *Contra III: The Alien Wars* eight years ago.

"Konami really called out of the blue and asked if I could redesign the look of the game for them, and I love *Contra* from back in the day," relates Wood, an Australia native. "And I figure I owe them, because I used Whipper-Snipper wire in the arcades to get free games when I was a kid."

Contra: Shattered Soldier picks up after the events of *Contra III*. Two commandos have just defeated the leader of an alien invasion, but afterwards, one of them cracks and kills the other, earning a trip to prison. Lo and behold, another alien force attacks Earth, and officials are forced to pluck him out of the Big House to save their asses once again.

"I get asked to design art for games all the time, but this is *Contra*!" remarks the 32-year-old Wood. "I think some people may be turned off by the difficulty, though. Many young players now are a little spoiled by games designed to be finished in a few hours. Back in the day, we had to fight hard to get through to higher levels, and the designers always made the next level visually more impressive than the last so you feel like you've accomplished something. I'm trying to do that with *Shattered Soldiers*."

If you can't wait to see what Wood's cooked up, check out his art gallery at **www.ashleywood.com**, and look for *Contra: Shattered Soldiers* this fall. ■ **MIKEY BENCIC**

videorumblings

OPEN SEASON Dinosaurs are coming back from extinction...and so is the guy who hunts them. After a lengthy absence, Acclaim's resident dinosaur hunter comes gunnin' for the GAMECUBE, PS2 and Xbox this month in *Turok Evolution*, the latest chapter in the former Golden Key/Valiant comic book turned video game franchise. This first-person shooter features a completely new engine and next-gen enhancements in graphics, gameplay and character A.I. that makes previous installments look prehistoric in comparison.

DINO MEAT Turok returns for some good hunting.

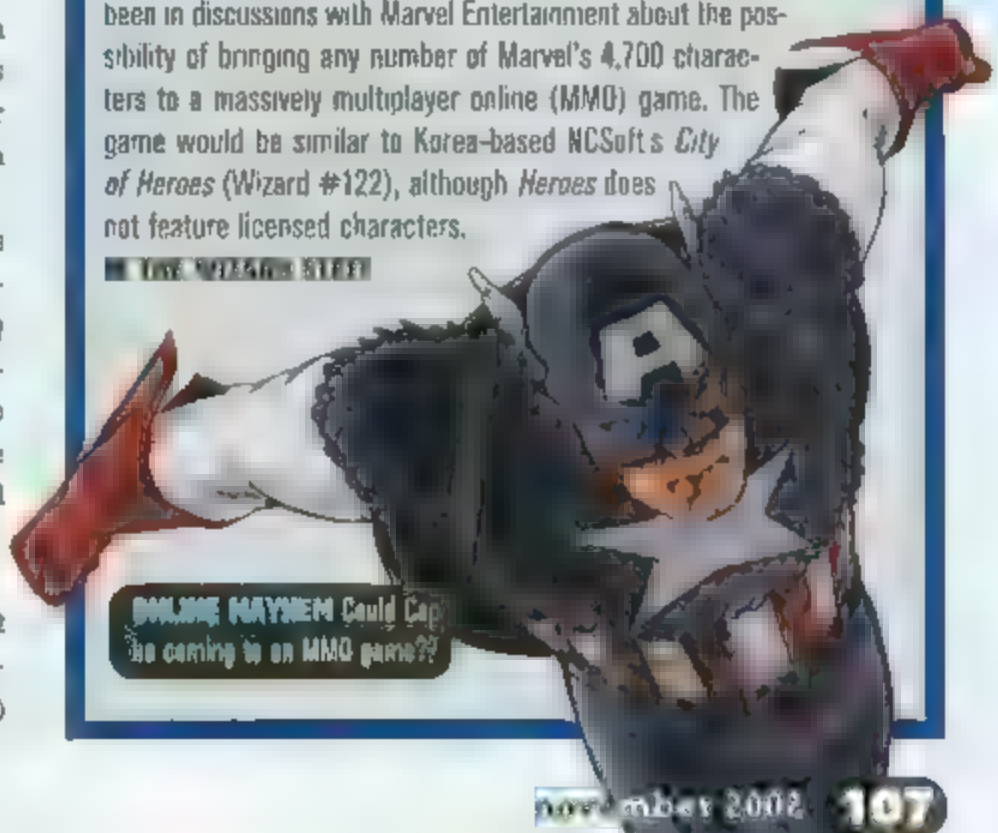
ROCK ON! Universal Studios has won the rights to the video game franchise "Spy Hunter," which they hope to develop as a starring vehicle for WWE wrestler The Rock ("The Scorpion King"). In the film, The Rock will play a fighter pilot-turned-intelligence agent who uses a fully armed Interceptor vehicle that has morphing capabilities to battle against other spies with equally sophisticated machines.

[illegible] OF THE WORLD Artist Simon Bisley (*Lobo, Judge Dredd*) has been tapped by 300 to develop character designs and create images for their upcoming video game, *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. The mature content title, described as "'The Matrix' meets Hellraiser,'" focuses on an archangel's attempts to gather the Chosen and prevent the end of the world by battling the biblical bringers of Armageddon—Pestilence, War, Famine and Death—and their minions. Look for it for the Xbox, GAMECUBE, PS2 and PC in fall 2003.

TATTOO YOU Jimmy, one of the Chosen, based on a Bisley design.

HEROES ONLINE According to The Hollywood Reporter, Sony Online Entertainment (*EverQuest, Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided*) has been in discussions with Marvel Entertainment about the possibility of bringing any number of Marvel's 4,700 characters to a massively multiplayer online (MMO) game. The game would be similar to Korea-based NCSoft's *City of Heroes* (Wizard #122), although *Heroes* does not feature licensed characters.

■ [illegible]



ONLINE MAYHEM Could Cap be coming to an MMO game??

manga MANIA!

DEATH BECOMES HER

Animated film based on Chaos! icon Lady Death rises on Halloween 2003

She may be the Queen of the Dead, but Lady Death's upcoming anime-inspired project is bursting with life.

Recently, Andrew Nelson, a spokesperson for Texas-based anime distributor ADV Films, announced the production for "Lady Death: The Movie" is moving full scream ahead, despite the recent news that Chaos! Comics, which owns the rights to the character, filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy. A retelling of her origin based on the comic, the film chronicles the Malevolent Maiden's rise from an innocent, young girl of the Middle Ages to the supernatural ruler of Hell she eventually becomes.

Currently, the film is at the tail end of the storyboarding stage, and upon its completion, the skilled animators of Korea's SunMin Image Pictures begin their task of bringing the Lady to life. At press time, director Carl Macek and producer Andy Orpiela were in Korea to oversee preliminary animation following their well-received preview of "Lady Death" at August's San Diego Comic-Con. The film will be digitally animated, allowing for a larger palette of colors to work with that will achieve a look similar to today's most popular comic books and video games.

ADV Films is aiming for a Halloween 2003 release, and while "Lady Death" will not be released in theaters, it may debut on a cable network before coming out on DVD.

But the undead fun doesn't stop there. There have already been discussions about a possible "Lady Death" television series and maybe even a sequel or two, depending on how well this film performs. To stay abreast of information as it develops, visit **www.ladydeaththemovie.com** for the latest details.

ANIMATING THE DEAD Early designs from the Lady Death animated film

ANIME BUZZBOX

JAPANESE ROUNDUP

KOREAN POWER With manga more popular than ever in the West, startup distributor Curtis Comics (**www.curtiscomics.com**) is endeavoring to deliver high-quality *manhwa*, or Korean manga, to the North American audience. The company debuted in July with eight titles, including *Barchetta*, about an assassin with a weapon attached to his arm, and *Pandemonium*, about a female cyborg charged with keeping the peace against a race of beastmen. Five more titles have been added to the lineup since then, which range from sci-fi and fantasy themes to romance and comedy.

ANGELIC HOST Producer/director James Cameron ("Terminator 2," "Titanic") announced at this year's San Diego Comic-Con that he is developing the manga/anime property *Battle Angel Alita* as a feature film. Created by Yukito Kishiro (*Aqua Knight*) and published here in the States by Viz, *Alita* is the story of a female cyborg and her attempt to discover her identity after she awakes with no recollection of her past.

POP STAR If you think you've got the talent to create your own manga, then TokyoPop wants you. The L.A.-based publisher is hosting a contest to discover the next big star in manga, so why shouldn't it be you? The winner will receive $2,500 and will get their creation published in next year's anthology, *Rising Stars of Manga*. Submissions should be self-contained stories 15-25 pages in length. The deadline is Dec. 16, 2002. For more information and an entry form, visit **www.tokyopop.com/news/mangatalent**.

TIGER BEAT Fans of the hit foreign language film "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" will be happy to hear ComicsOne will be publishing the comic book adaptations of the same novels the movie was based on. Author Wang Du Lu penned five books about the exploits of Shu Lien Li Mu Bai (Michelle Yeoh and Chow Yun-Fat in the film) and the Green Destiny Sword, but the movie was based only on events in the fourth book. ComicsOne's series of full-color, 120-page graphic novels will encompass more, thus giving readers insight into the early exploits of Lien and Bai and how Lien fared after the death of her beloved.

Beautifully illustrated by Andy Seto (*Saint Legend*), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* will be available bimonthly starting in November.

TO THE GRAVE "Trigun" fans, take note: Series creator Yasuhiro Nightow provided the original concept and character design for Sega's new PlayStation 2 shooting game, *Gungrave*. Featuring an undead assassin and a coffin that doubles as a rocket launcher, the game is available in stores now.

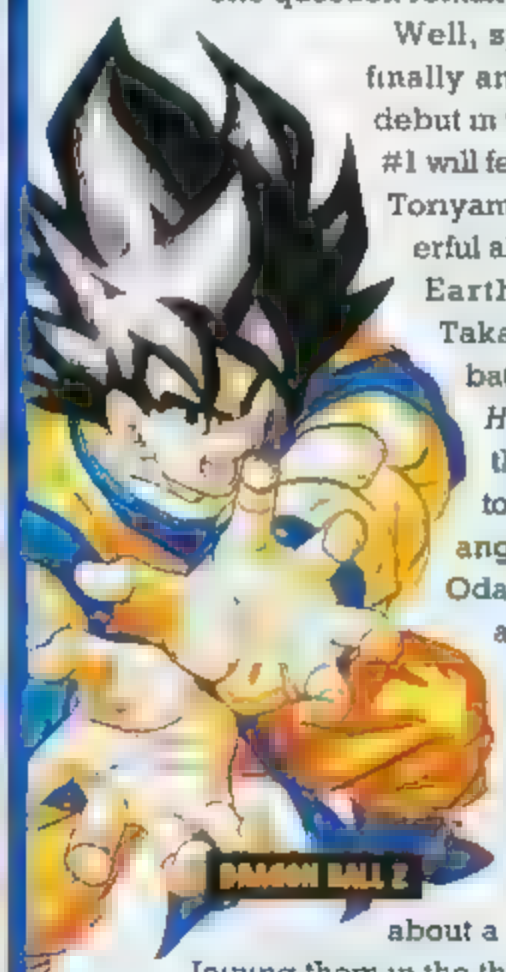
■ **THE WIZARD STAFF**

VIZ 'JUMPS' UP

Publisher announces anthology lineup

Get ready to "jump" for manga!

Once Viz had secured the North American publishing rights for *SHONEN JUMP*, Japan's No. 1-selling manga publication (moving roughly 3.4 million copies a week), one question remained: What's going to be in it?



Well, speculate no more: Viz has finally announced which series will debut in the first several issues. Issue #1 will feature: *Dragon Ball Z* by Akira Toriyama, the classic tale of a powerful alien warrior who defends the Earth; *Yu-Gi-Oh!* by Kazuki Takahashi, about a gamer who battles with mystical cards; *Yu Yu Hakusho* by Yoshihiro Togashi, the story of a spirit sent back to Earth to serve as a "guardian angel"; *One Piece* by Eiichiro Oda, a comedy adventure about a pirate who can stretch like rubber—but can't swim!; and *SandLand* by Akira Toriyama, the tale of a sheriff in a postapocalyptic world in search of water. In the second issue, *Naruto*, a story about a ninja school, will be added. Joining them in the third issue is *Shaman King*, the tale of good and evil shamans from around the world.

Don't expect short serials either. Viz is endeavoring to mimic *JUMP* Japanese publisher Shueisha (who has purchased an interest in Viz Communications), which typically produces hundreds of pages per issue.

"[Each story will] be approximately 40-50 pages," explains Jason Thompson, U.S. editor for *JUMP*. Do the math—that amounts to about 200-250 pages per issue. "Plus the magazine will be printed in the original right to left format to preserve the authenticity of the artwork."

You can find the first issue of *SHONEN JUMP* for $4.95 this November in comics stores, newsstands, SunCoast Video, Musicland and several other online and offline sources. "We hope it inspires a new age of anthology comic magazines," attests Thompson. "This is a great way to read manga—or any comics for that matter." ■ **JENNIFER M. CONTINO**

manga MANIA!

HOT IMPORTS

MANGA

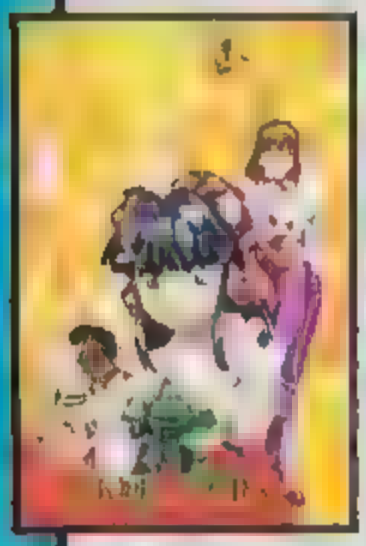
COWBOY BEBOP VOL. 1 GN (TokyoPop) Spike Spiegel has never lost a bounty. Faye Valentine always gets what she wants. So what happens when these two—*and* Jet—are after the same bounty? Chaos ensues. **$9.99**

GHOST IN THE SHELL 2: MAN-MACHINE INTERFACE #1 (Dark Horse) Motoko Aramaki the cyborg cop is back in the long-anticipated sequel to Masamune Shirow's *Ghost in the Shell*. As if being a cyborg weren't enough, Motoko discovers that her very existence is causing temporal fluctuations on a universal level. **$3.99**

SPIDER-MAN: LEGEND OF THE SPIDER CLAN #1 (Marvel) In the Marvel Mangaverse, the Avengers fly mechs, Johnny Storm is a woman and Spider-Man is a ninja. **$2.50**

STORY OF THE TAO #1 (ComicsOne) After the deaths of his father and brother at the hands of his treasonous stepmother Prince Lee finds sanctuary with the monks of the Tao, Buddhist Zen and Mystic sects. **$13.95**

ANIME



PRINCESS ARETE VOL. 1: PLEASED TO MEET YOU (Viz) Don't you just hate it when someone secretly replaces your arm with a mutated nanotech appendage? Ryo Takatsuki sure does. DVD–**$24.98**

SAKURA WARS OVA VOL. 1: RETURN OF THE SPIRIT WARRIORS (ADV Films) His days with the Imperial Floral Assault Division over Captain Ohgami prepares for his next assignment. DVD–**$24.98**

TSUKIKAGE RAN VOLS. 1 & 2 (Bandai) Meet Ran, a female ronin samurai who enjoys slicing with her katana almost as much as she enjoys sake. Ran and Myao, a Chinese martial artist, wander wherever the roads takes them. Too bad it usually takes them straight to trouble. DVDs **$29.98** each

X TV SERIES VOL. 1 (Pioneer) The Dragons of Earth wish to purge the planet of all humanity, while the Dragons of Heaven swear to stop them. And between these two groups of supernatural warriors stands one young man who will be humanity's savior—or its destroyer. DVD–**$29.98**, DVD W/STORAGE BOX–**$34.98**

STUFF

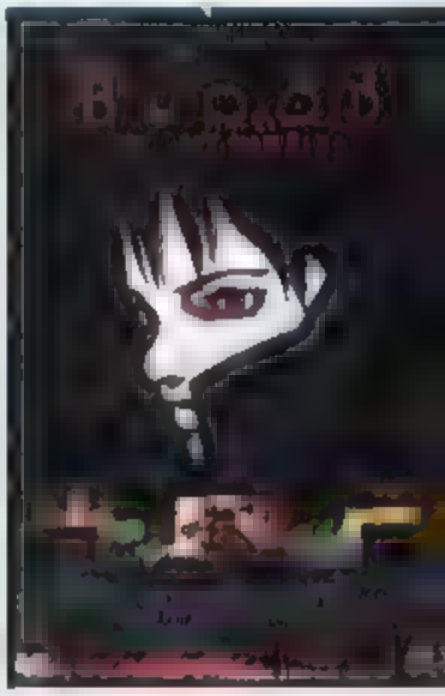
NEON GENESIS EVANGELION: THE THIRD ANGEL SACHIEL ACTION FIGURE (Kaiyodo) Sculpted by Art Asylum, this 8" figure features extensive shoulder articulation and painstaking detail work. Sachiel stands on a base consisting of a crushed NERV ship and trees to remind people of his sheer destructive capabilities. (November) **$22.99**

TRIGUN: VASH THE STAMPEDE 12-INCH ACTION FIGURE (Toycom) Vash the Stampede, arguably the coolest character in anime, surely warrants a cool action figure. And with 13 points of articulation, Koroneko the black cat and removable sunglasses, this 12-incher certainly qualifies. (July) **$34.99**

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS? STORY IDEAS? DROP US A LINE AT:
MANGAMANIA@WIZARDWORLD.COM

FRIGHT NIGHT

Have Halloween fun with spooky anime



Too old for trick or treating? Why not turn out all the lights and curl up under a blanket in front of the TV to check out some of the creepiest anime around.

BLOOD: THE LAST VAMPIRE (Manga Entertainment) Screw Buffy—the enigmatic Saya is the hottest skirt-wearing vampire slayer of them all! On a deep-cover mission, Saya must infiltrate a school on a U.S. military base in Tokyo in order to kill a pair of vampiric monstrosities who are preying on the children. But could this mysterious assassin actually be one of them?

NIGHT WARRIORS: DARKSTALKER'S REVENGE (Pioneer Entertainment) Based on the popular Capcom video game franchise, a cursed warrior monk must join forces with a pair of Chinese ghosts in order to save the world from a self styled alien god of destruction. With everything from undead samurai and Sasquatches to Playmate-quality Succubae duking it out for control of the night, "Darkstalkers" has it all.

PERFECT BLUE (Manga Entertainment) A rising young starlet finds herself teetering dangerously on the edge of madness when she becomes the focus of a stalker's twisted games. No ghosts, no goblins—just an unnerving psychological thriller that's one of the scariest movies ever. Period.

SERIAL EXPERIMENTS LAIN (Pioneer Entertainment) This creepy series follows a 14-year-old girl named Rein who finds herself immersed in the cyberspace of a super-Internet known as the Wired. Soon, everything begins to fall apart when she begins to question what reality is, as well as the stability of insanity.

VAMPIRE HUNTER D: BLOODLUST (Urban Vision Entertainment) With gorgeous animation and character designs, this remake is an instant classic that surpasses even the original. The only thing creepier than the film's horrifying mutants, monsters and vampires is its cursed hero D who battles to control an uncontrollable bloodlust and a demonic talking hand! ■ JMcD

BOOK of the MONTH

THE ULTIMATES

LARGER-THAN-LIFE HEROES DEAL WITH LARGER-THAN-LIFE PROBLEMS IN 'THE ULTIMATES,' PART DRAMA AND PART WIDE-SCREEN SPECTACLE

What kind of world exists where Captain America smiles while beating you to a pulp, Thor's a former mental patient and the Hulk is hornier than a high school freshman?

It's the world of *The Ultimates*, Marvel's Ultimate answer to the Avengers. But the Ultimates aren't your father's superheroes. With a combustible combination of character-driven plots that'll keep your stomach in knots eventually giving way to cinematic superhero action that hammers you over the head, *The Ultimates* is quickly gaining stature as the benchmark for superhero books.

The secret to the book's success? Its dead-on portrayal of realistic people with the most fantastic and dangerous job imaginable—professional superhero

"*The Ultimates* is another step in the direction these kinds of characters have been taking for thousands of years," notes series writer Mark Millar. "They started off as gods and have been working their way down to the streets for centuries. *The Ultimates* is very much an old-fashioned Marvel book—realistic heroes with problems being the root of the success achieved by 1960s Marvel."

Millar and artist Bryan Hitch crafted a ticking time bomb of a story through their first arc (issues #1-#6), slowly building tension before the book exploded with action.

The series kicked off with S.H.I.E.L.D funding a new super soldier program to create an army of superheroes to fight menaces like Magneto. The team's originally composed of Bruce Banner (with his Hulk transformations under control), Giant-Man, the Wasp and "the man with a plan," billionaire industrialist/playboy Tony Stark (Iron Man). Banner toils to recreate the super-soldier serum that spawned Captain America but his failed efforts are cast aside when the original Cap—like the regular Marvel U Cap—is found frozen in the Atlantic Ocean. After Cap thaws out and joins, the Ultimates are ready for their first mission—which doesn't happen for months, causing the government and the media to grumble about a $150 billion project that's shown little in return.

While the series simmered through the first four issues, the pot began to boil over in issue #5, as the Ultimates faced their first real mission—bring down the Hulk! When Banner can't reconcile his failures, the puny scientist injects himself with a mixture of Hulk and super-soldier serums, transforming him into a gray rampaging force of nature that decimates most of New York's theater district in just under 10 minutes!

Mass destruction never looked so exquisite, courtesy of Hitch's amazingly detailed artwork. His cinematic style helps readers feel like they just stepped out of their local cineplex.

"I'd never say this to his face, but Hitch is just so bloody brilliant," gushes Millar. "Everything I visualize when I'm writing is just multiplied by a thousand by the time it reaches the finished page."

Hitch is no less enthusiastic of Millar's writing. "This is the best work of both

WEEK-ENDER: We freeze a popsicle stick in the Atlantic Ocean, Ultimate Captain America has evolved seamlessly into his role as the team's field commander.

I'm just here to make sure those cuts and bruises of yours get the proper attention, pal. C'mere, let me get a closer look at that big gash on your cheek...
But I haven't got a gash on my cheek

PUNTLOOK: After Banner transforms into the Hulk for the sole reason of providing the Ultimates with something to fight, Cap has little pity for the rude dude's predicament.

our careers," says Hitch. "I enjoy doing the big fight scenes, but the real challenge is to bring to life our characters. I can be as excited about drawing the façade of St. Patrick's Cathedral as I can be about the Hulk laying into Thor."

But that doesn't mean *The Ultimates* will turn into a superhero sewing bee. Expect the destruction level to skyrocket, and the membership to be dynamic, as upcoming issues' Ultimate versions of Hawkeye, Vision and Black Widow will all appear in future storylines. The reason for the influx of new blood is simple, according to Millar.

"Super-brawls mean super-casualties," he says. "To fill out the numbers, they need to look for new soldiers, but any number of these might decide it's not for them. I want to look at the idea of a superteam as a *job*."

But what kinds of menaces will the Ultimates tackle while they're on the clock? Millar says not to expect the routine costumed-crazies-of-the-month bit.

"We wanted to do the Skrulls, Ultron and so on, but Bill [Jemas] and Joe [Quesada] talked us out of it," he reveals. "*Avengers* covers these kind of stories very well. They asked us to rethink the superteam book for the 21st century."

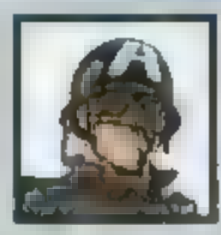
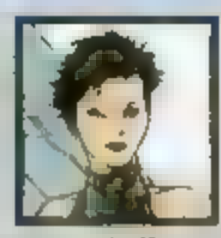
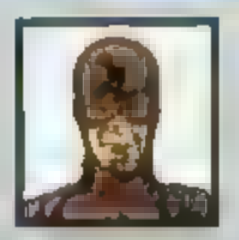
In the current storyarc, running from issues #7-#12, the Ultimates face their first true test as a team, and it involves nothing less than saving the world!

"[Saving the world] happens so often in superhero comics that we forget how amazing it is," exclaims Millar. "Arc Three takes a different tack entirely in that we've got a bunch of inter-linked short stories for six issues, the main one being that Thor might not really be all he claims to be. It's also going to feature Captain Britain, because I like him so much, and the Defenders, because I've come up with a really funny way of doing them."

Knowing Millar and Hitch, "doing" the Defenders will be a job for one overly-aroused Hulk! ■ **ANDY SERWIN** (w)

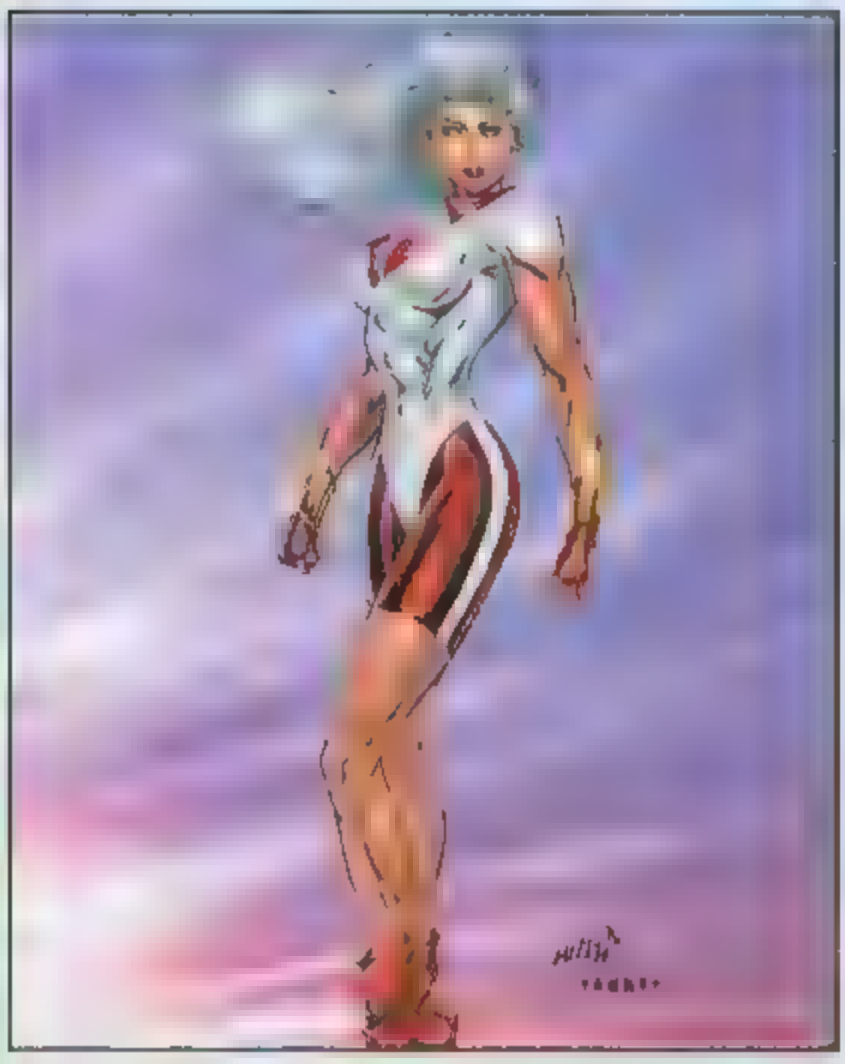
mirrormirror

The Ultimates vs. the Avengers—their names may be the same, but everything else is radically different! Here's how they shake down.

AVENGERS	ULTIMATES
HULK	
Only a member for one issue, the Hulk holds historical significance for helping found the team.	He's a full-fledged member and a raging powerhouse, but his claim to fame so far is pounding the team (issue #5)
CAPTAIN AMERICA	
	
The Sentinel of Liberty and a true American icon, Cap prides himself in, above all else, being a faithful representative of the American people.	The team's rabble-rouser and a recently defrosted icon, Cap prides himself on saving government dollars and kicking Banner's teeth in.
WASP	
	
A privileged young woman (hey, she is a W.A.S.P.), the Wasp grew into one of the team's anchors, even becoming leader for quite some time.	An Asian mutant, the Wasp eats bugs, lays eggs in her bed and her best tactic in combat so far has been flashing her breasts at opponents.
GIANT-MAN	
	
Bio-chemist Giant-Man endured split personalities, paranoid delusions, slapping Wasp around and was even court-marshalled from the team.	Geneticist Giant-Man pops Prozac like candy, and flexes his muscle by beating Wasp in issue #6, even spraying the poor missus with Raid!
IRON MAN	
A billionaire industrialist and playboy with a heart condition, Tony Stark beat his alcoholism to become one of the strongest members of the team.	A billionaire industrialist and playboy with a brain tumor, Tony Stark embraces his alcoholism and bags Shannon Elizabeth in zero gravity.

PICKS

spotlighton...



YOUNGBLOOD: BLOODSPORT #1 (of 4) (Arcade Comics)

WHY IT'S COOL Take the high-octane, pulse-pounding storytelling ability of Mark Millar (*Ultimates*) combined with the lightning rod of controversy that is Rob Liefeld and this book is a curiosity on par with anything you'll see at a carnival sideshow (bearded lady included!). This book's celebrating the 10-year anniversary of Youngblood's debut, so expect to see a host of your favorite characters, including Shaft, Badrock and Diehard. "Fans of *Youngblood* will be thrilled to hear that Mark and I are cramming every single Youngblood member over the past 10 years into this mini-epic," gushed Liefeld online. "We're talking *Youngblood, Team Youngblood, Bloodpool* and Alan Moore's *Youngblood*. If they appeared in *Youngblood* they're making an appearance." Does that include Deathblood, Darkblood, Redblood and Bloodblood?
IN ISSUE #1 The team gets together after several years apart to save the world. Or something along those lines. By Millar and Liefeld. $2.99 (Oct.)

ALIAS (Marvel/MAX)

WHY IT'S COOL Main character Jessica Jones is never afraid to speak her mind, making her a volatile and entertaining character. In *Alias* #13, Jessica overhears a priest planning his next sermon on how mutants are an abomination in God's eyes. The feisty P.I. then rips the priest a new butt-hole for his intolerant ways! Whatever happened to "Love thy neighbor"?
IN ISSUE #15 The tagline says it all: "Look over your shoulder, Jessica...Cage is back!" (For those not in the loop, Cage and Jessica did the nasty in a very...uncomfortable place—and it's not the back of a Volkswagen Bug!) By Brian Michael Bendis and Michael Gaydos. **Mature Readers.** $2.99 (Oct. 2)

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN (Marvel)

WHY IT'S COOL Two Doc Ocks are twice as deadly and twice as much fun to read! In issue #43, Doctor Octavius gets conned into a job interview where the CEO gasses the good doctor and steals the designs for his deadly mechanical arms! After a few upgrades, this upstart Doc Ock hits the streets, and with Spidey out of town, it's up to Octavius to stop the rampage!
IN ISSUE #46 A new storyarc kicks off this ish, and if you thought Spidey had it tough with Mary Jane, Doc Ock and the Lobster Man (?), wait till you see what he's up against now! By J. Michael Straczynski, John Romita Jr. and Scott Hanna. $2.25 (Oct. 9)

AVENGERS (Marvel)

WHY IT'S COOL New writer Geoff Johns knows his Earth's Mightiest continuity like Captain America knows the Constitution, making for some kick-ass scenes! In issue #57, after the team's thoroughly trounced a rampaging Mr. Hyde, Cap delivers the *coup de grace* with a shield strike to Hyde's head. Afterwards, Cap mutters to the villain, "Couldn't bend this shield, could you Hyde?" a reference to Hyde's destruction of Cap's original shield back in *Avengers* (vol. 1) #276.
IN ISSUE #59 The Avengers must keep the planet running in the absence of most of the world leaders. By Johns, Kieron Dwyer and Rick Remender. $2.25 (Oct. 30)

BATMAN (DC)

WHY IT'S COOL Batman's been through a lot lately (the whole "Fugitive" and "Murderer" storylines), but it's what's coming up that's got us psyched! Jeph Loeb (*Spider-Man*

MR TITLES DENOTED WITH AN MR CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

Blue) and Jim Lee (*WildC.A.T.S.*) take over as the regular creative team this month, and there's now more buzz on this book than a beehive the size of Mount Rushmore! (And for more on how these two powerhouses scored the gig, check out the feature on **page 50!**)

IN ISSUE #608 Lee and Loeb kick off a 12-part storyline entitled "Hush," as Bats gets mixed up in a kidnapping scheme that's masterminded by...Killer Croc? By Loeb, Lee and Scott Williams. **$2.25** (Oct. 23)

BATTLE OF THE PLANETS (Top Cow)

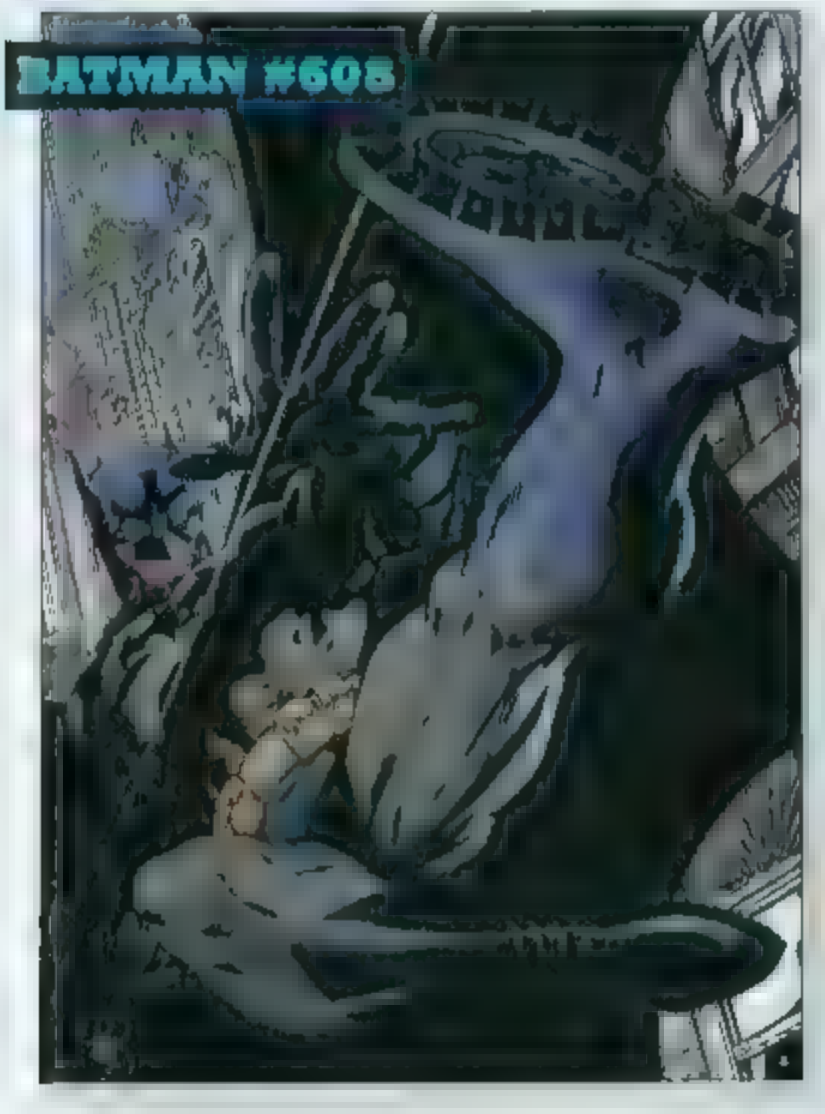
WHY IT'S COOL As Keyop proves in issue #2, big things come in small packages. During a raid on a Spectra space station, Keyop comes across an insane doctor performing hideous experiments on innocent animals. As Princess enters the room, she discovers that Keyop has turned the evil physician into a human pincushion with a giant scalpel. Uh, we're pretty sure we never saw anything *that* bloody on the cartoon.

IN ISSUE #5 While internal tensions threaten to split the group apart, there's a mysterious connection brewing between the Spectra leader Zoltar and Gatchman project director Dr. Anderson. By Muniur Sharneff, Wilson Tortosa, Alex Ross and Shane Law. **$2.99** (Oct. 16)

CAPTAIN AMERICA (Marvel Knights)

WHY IT'S COOL Captain America's no longer pulling his punches, making for truly riveting storytelling. Cap's been known as a hero who values human life above all else, but in issue #3, he takes a more soldierly stance to protecting life. To save 200 innocent hostages from being killed, Cap stops the terrorist Al-Tariq in the quickest, most efficient way possible—he snaps his neck with one punch! Guess Tariq shouldn't have woken the sleeping giant.

IN ISSUE #6 Cap's war against terrorism comes to a stunning, bloody conclusion. By John Ney Rieber and John Cassaday. **$2.99** (Oct. 23)

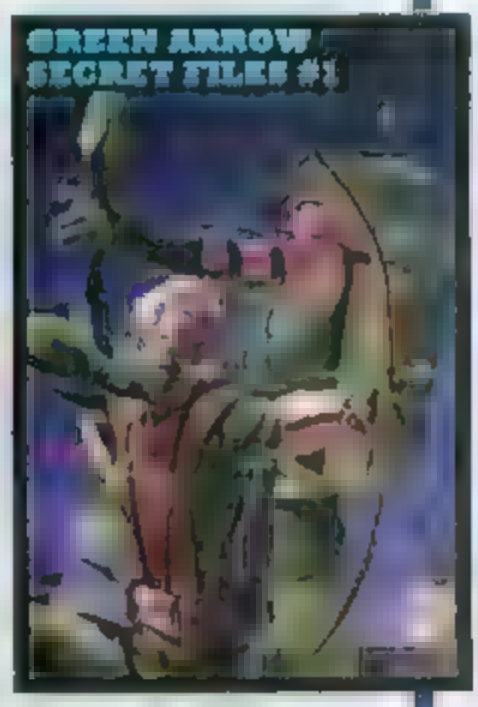


newreleases

DEAD TO RIGHTS (Dark Horse) Based on the hit Namco video game, *Dead to Rights* explores the seedy underside of Grant City and undercover cop Jack Slate's search for his father's killer. $5.95 (Oct. 9)

GLOBAL FREQUENCY #1 (OF 12) (WildStorm/DC) The Global Frequency's made up of 1,001 clandestine members across the planet. When the call comes through, you have 30 minutes to save the world! $2.95 (Oct. 23)

GREEN ARROW SECRET FILES #1 (DC) Coming back to life has agreed with Green Arrow, as the Emerald Archer gets his first-ever *Secret Files* book, which examines his origin, his arsenal and his friends and foes. $4.95 (Oct. 23)



GUNS, DRUGS AND MONSTERS: A CAL McDONALD MYSTERY (IDW) Hardboiled P.I. Cal McDonald finds himself in L.A. and up to his chin in monster trouble. $15.99 (Oct.)

KILLRAVEN #1 (OF 6) (Marvel) When Martians overrun Earth and enslave humanity in the not-too-distant future, the gladiator called Killraven must organize the resistance and save the planet. $2.99 (Oct. 9)

KISSING CHAOS: NONSTOP BEAUTY #1 (OF 4) (Oni Press) Ashley's part of an underground artist movement to bring radical change to society, but those plans get put on hold by when she's tangled up in a deadly conspiracy. **MR.** $2.95 (Oct.)

MAGE KNIGHT: STOLEN DESTINY #1 (OF 5) (IDW) Based on the hit game from WizKids, this series tells the story of a young champion who must rise to greatness in order to save his lands from three different warring magical factions. $3.50 (Oct.)

MEKANIX #1 (OF 6) (Marvel) Chris Claremont (*X-Treme X-Men*) pens this adventure starring his self-proclaimed favorite X-Man, Kitty Pryde, as the phasing mutant finds trouble at college. $2.99 (Oct. 9)

NEGATION: LAWBRINGER #1 (CrossGen) Learn the hidden secrets of the Negation empire through the eyes of Lawbringer Oztr, and find out what effect this knowledge will have on the CrossGen U.! $2.95 (Oct. 9)

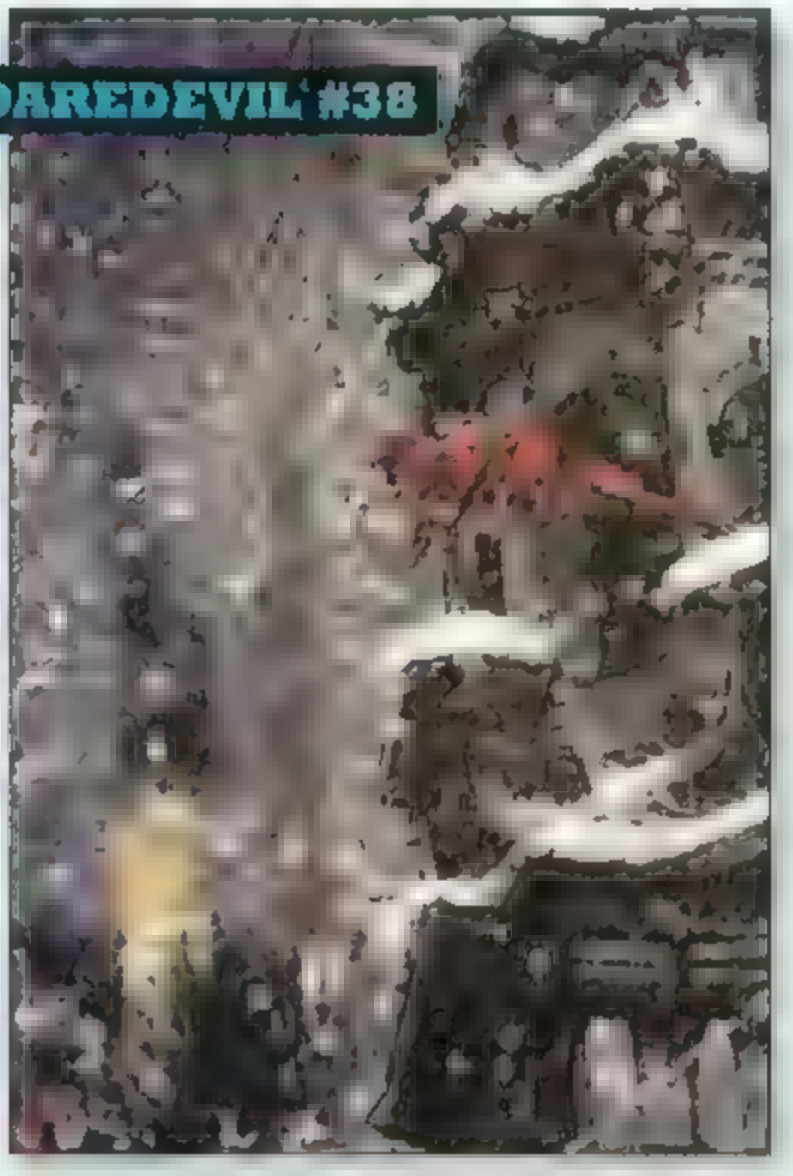
NOBLE CAUSES: FAMILY SECRETS #1 (OF 4) (Image) The Noble superhero family must go on after the death of the beloved Race, but there's more going on behind the scenes that'll have the Nobles reeling. $2.95 (Oct. 2)

TRANSFORMERS THE WAR WITHIN #1 (Dreamwave) This is where the legend of the Transformers begins! What events transpired on Cybertron that turned Optimus Prime into the leader he is now? Find out here! $2.95 (Oct.)

DAREDEVIL (Marvel Knights)

WHY IT'S COOL Everybody loves a buddy flick (or comic, in this case), and no two heroes in the Marvel U. are tighter than Spidey and Daredevil. In issue #35—with Matt Murdock dealing with being outed as DD by the media—Spidey shows up to lend moral support but winds up helping DD battle an enraged Mr. Hyde! The two heroes pummel the baddie, as Spidey hits him with a van and DD pounds him with a mailbox. Isn't that a federal offense?

IN ISSUE #38 A new storyarc kicks off as Matt Murdock must defend the vigilante called White Tiger in a murder case. By Brian Michael Bendis and Manuel Gutierrez. **$2.99** (Oct. 16)



EXILES (Marvel)

WHY IT'S COOL Being the closet romantics that we are, we really dug issue #16, which, through flashbacks, showed how Nocturne and her now-comatose lover Thunderbird fell in love. Our favorite scene? The revelation where we learn that Nocturne once dated Thunderbird's brother in her universe! Now *that's* keeping it in the family!

IN ISSUE #18 A terrible secret from Morph's past has somehow caught up with him across the dimensional jumps—and it just may mean curtains for him and the other Exiles! By Judd Winick, Mike McKone and Jon Holdredge. **$2.25** (Oct. 2)

FABLES (Vertigo/DC)

WHY IT'S COOL Bigby Wolf is fast becoming one of our favorite comic book P.I.s, and he's taking the "bad cop" routine to a whole new level! There's been plenty of hints that Bigby has wolf-like abilities (super-hearing, enhanced smell), but in issue #3, he totally wolfs out as the Big Bad Wolf against Bluebeard, who's trying to torture Jack to get info on Rose Red's murder. Hope that "big dog" has been housebroken.

gorepicks

Ready to get scared stupid, boys and ghouls?

It's October, so that can only mean one thing: Halloween's right around the corner, and to help you get your freak on—or should we say fright on, we're serving up a host of Trick-or-Treat picks that will surely turn you white as a sheet. So turn on all the lights, get the fire roaring, and prepare yourself for some serious ghost stories—comic book style!

BLUE HOLIDAY: DEAD MAN'S PARTY (Oni Press) Blue and the gang get together on Halloween night to scare the living crap out of one another with a story-filled frightfest. **Mature Readers. $2.95** (Oct.)

BOGUS DEAD (Alternative Comics) Forty-two of the best indy creators, including Jim Mahfood and James Kochalka, conspire to craft stories of what happens after zombies rise from the grave to devour the living! **MR. $9.95** (Oct.)

BUFFY TVS #50 (Dark Horse) The "Hellmouth to Mouth" storyline concludes in this ish, as Buffy rescues Dawn and Xander from The Scourge! But before they can get away clean, they've gotta take down The Scourge's secret leader, and they'll need help from Angel and Faith. **$3.50** (Oct. 30)

BUFFY TVS: BROKEN BOTTLE OF DJINN (Dark Horse) In this one-shot tale, see how Buffy's adventures in the 1990s parallel the trials of a Slayer in 1930s New York City! **$3.50** (Oct. 16)

DOGWITCH #1 (Sirius) Cast into the wilderness because of her unique brand of kinky witchcraft, Violet Grimm becomes a gothic recluse and makes amateur, arcane porn films. **MR. $2.95** (Oct.)

DOLL AND CREATURE (AIT/Planet-Lar) In this graphic novel, two outcast individuals team up to battle drug-altered creatures called Hydes in a world where religion has been outlawed, and wanton hedonism is the norm. **$12.95** (Oct.)

JACK THE LANTERN #0 (of 6) (Castle Rain Entertainment) Jack Gordon Corby is a man used to battling demons, but he's about to become entangled in a war between two demonic adversaries that could destroy all creation. **MR. $2.99** (Oct.)

LITTLE GLOOMY VOL. 1 (Amaze Ink/Slave Labor) Gloomy's a human girl with extraordinary friends: monsters who either secretly love her or those that try hard not to eat her! **$12.95** (Oct.)

PATRICK THE WOLF BOY: ANOTHER HALLOWEEN SPECIAL (Bluewolf) Patrick the Wolf Boy hosts a series of Halloween events, including a costume contest, and welcomes the return of an old friend: the Grim Reaper! **$2.95** (Oct.)

ROUTE 666 #5 (CrossGen) Cassie hops a train to get away from the posse dragnet that's after her, but she meets up with a mysterious drifter who seems to know more than his fair share about the supernatural. **$2.95** (Oct. 23)

SPLATTER COMIX #1 (Scary Planet) This Halloween anthology one-shot combines the camp of "Creepshow" with the gore of your favorite slasher flicks—in glorious red, white and black! **MR. $2.95** (Oct.)

30 DAYS OF NIGHT #3 (of 3) (IDW) The mini-series comes to a close, as married deputies Eben and Stella face the final attack of the vampire horde descending on their Alaskan town. **MR. $3.99** (Oct.)

VAMPIRELLA #14 (Harris) Vampirella must convince an ornery spirit to aid her against the forces of Hell and save her friends from the Hexxus. **$2.99** (Oct.)

IN ISSUE #6 A new storyarc called "Animal Farm" kicks off, as the non-human members of the Fables crew stage a revolution at the Upstate New York farm where they reside. "When you're going to have a revolution at a farm full of animals, you have to have the three little pigs in the thick of things," explains series writer Bill Willingham. "Goldilocks and the Three Bears are also big in this story, and every perverse joke that's ever been made about them will be addressed." By Willingham, Mark Buckingham and Steve Leialoha. **MR. $2.50** (Oct. 9)

FLASH (DC)

WHY IT'S COOL The only place to read *Flash* is on the edge of your seat, and issue #188 offers not one but *two* jaw-dropping cliffhangers. First up, after Flash saves Central and Keystone City from an army of supervillains, the Rogues retreat to regroup, only to find themselves being courted by a new leader—Captain Cold! And in the second prologue, Wally and Linda get a surprise they never expected...but they're expecting now, 'cuz Linda's pregnant.

IN ISSUE #191 Hawkman guest stars as he and the Scarlet Speedster must battle Brother Grimm and his army of trolls and dragons! By Geoff Johns, Scott Kolins and Doug Hazlewood. $2.25 (Oct. 30)

G.I. JOE: FRONTLINE (Image)

WHY IT'S COOL This brand-new series takes the same approach to the Joes as *Tangled Web* does for Spider-Man different storyarcs by a rotating cast of creative teams that make for kick-ass stories. So who does Image tap for the initial storyline? How about original *G.I. Joe* writer Larry Hama, the man who turned the Joes into Real American Heroes? "I'm totally flabbergasted," says Hama of the Joes' current popularity. "But it's very good and very familiar to be back. It's a bit like going home again. I have some insights into the old characters that only came to me as time passed. I am pretty much taking up the thread from where it was left off and keeping as close to the original style as possible."

IN ISSUE #1 Learn what the Joes were up to between the time they were decommissioned in 1994 and the present, as this storyline fills in the gaps on some secret battles with Cobra! By Hama, Dan Jurgens and Bob Layton. **$2.95** (Oct. 9)

GREEN ARROW (DC)

WHY IT'S COOL Being dead must have pissed Green Arrow off, 'cuz he's pulling no punches against Onomatopoeia, the superhero serial killer who attacked G.A.'s son, Connor. In issue #15, Ollie shoots four arrows into the would-be killer, then stabs him with two others until the guy's leaking worse than the S.S. Minnow before it crashed!

IN ISSUE #18 Green Arrow and Arsenal take a trip to their former estate, only to find a new resident in the old Arrow-cave—Solomon Grundy! By Brad Meltzer, Phil Hester and Ande Parks. **$2.50** (Oct. 30)

GREEN LANTERN (DC)

WHY IT'S COOL There's a new baddie who debuted in GL #152 that's got us pumped, since there aren't enough nasty supervillains around. What menace could be responsible for causing thousands of people to riot in New York City, as well as kick the crap outta Green Lantern, Sentinel and Jade without breaking a sweat? Would you believe...Brainwave? We didn't either, but we can't wait till he shows up again!

IN ISSUE #155 Green Lantern tries to talk the Flash and the JLA into traveling back in time with him to avoid a terrible tragedy. By Judd Winick, Dale Eaglesham and Rodney Ramos. $2.25 (Oct. 9)

INCREDIBLE HULK (Marvel)

WHY IT'S COOL Writer Bruce Jones has served up some great scenes during his run, but issue #43 offers up one of our favorite moments of the year! As the evil Agent Pratt prepares to kill Banner, Officer Sally Riker tries to save Bruce by shooting Pratt. Unfortunately, her shot goes straight at Banner, but before it can turn his head into pulp, Banner transforms into the Hulk and catches the bullet in his teeth...while grrrrrng!

IN ISSUE #46 Agent Pratt returns from the dead, and he and Banner take a drive to the county morgue for a meeting with a mutual acquaintance. By Jones, Stuart Immonen and Scott Koblish. **$2.25** (Oct. 16)

JSA (DC)

WHY IT'S COOL If you're going to judge a book by it's cover, then *JSA* #38 scores an A+! Michael Bair, who sometimes inks the book, takes the spotlight as solo artist on the cover, and it's a wonderfully rendered piece featuring the entire lineup of the JSA, past and present, in a "class picture" type pose. The art is so fantastic, it leaves us wondering why Bair doesn't pencil more!

IN ISSUE #41 While the team must stop Black Baraz from destroying the Tyler Company, Black Adam and Captain Marvel have a man-to-man chat about their roles in the team. By David S. Goyer, Geoff Johns, Leonard Kirk and Keith Champagne. **$2.50** (Oct. 16)

NEW X-MEN (Marvel)

WHY IT'S COOL Grant Morrison's so good a scribe, he creates a French mutant who's actually cool—Fantomex! (And you know how we feel about ze French!) Fantomex pops up

outta nowhere shot full of holes, demands sanctuary from Prof. X, then charges Charley $1 billion for info about a deadly new menace called Weapon XII that could wipe out all mutant life on Earth! Finally, a French import to make us forget "Moulin Rouge"!

IN ISSUE #133 While Wolverine moves closer to uncovering hidden secrets about his past, an Afghani Muslim mutant named Dust wants to join the X-Men! By Morrison, Ethan Van Sciver and Norm Rapmund. **$2.25** (Oct. 16)

PETER PARKER: SPIDER-MAN (Marvel)

WHY IT'S COOL Writer Paul Jenkins has crafted the creepiest Green Goblin story in recent memory. In issue #46, there's a very twisted scene where the Goblin's gleefully playing with a trio of action figures—of himself, Spidey and Gwen Stacy! Things take a disturbing turn when the Gwen figure tumbles to the ground, and its head falls off, paralleling her real death. Why doesn't Spidey kill this goon already?!?

IN ISSUE #49 Part 2 of the "Big Question" storyarc finds Spidey teaming up with the mysterious Enigma to uncover the terrible secret of the AGK Corporation. By Jenkins and Mark Buckingham. **$2.25** (Oct. 16)

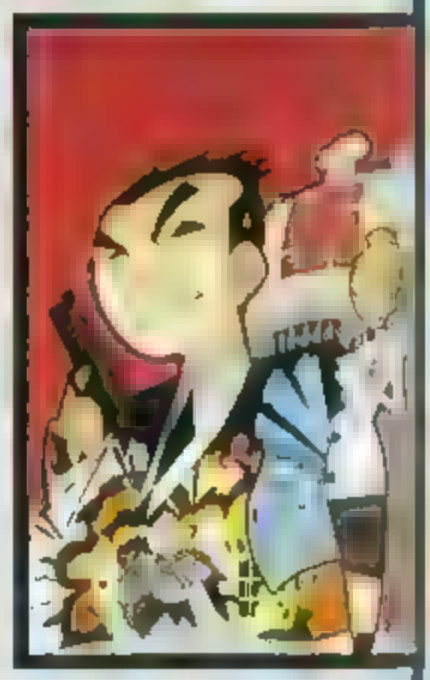
RUSE (CrossGen)

WHY IT'S COOL Most master criminals talk about grand plans of revenge, but Malcolm Lightbourne's one villain who does something about it! In issue #10, we finally learn what diabolical scheme Lightbourne—Simon Archard's former mentor—has planned: He's going to destroy all of Partington by flooding the caverns beneath it in order to sink the whole city (or back up every toilet in town!)

IN ISSUE #12 & #13 Simon and Lightbourne have a fateful end to their feud, while repair work begins on Partington. By Mark Waid, Scott Beatty, Butch Guice and Mike Perkins. $2.95 each. (Oct. 2 and Oct. 30, respectively)

ontheedge

GET YOUR BLACK BELT IN 'GUN FU'



What do you get when you cross Hong Kong action films with hip-hop dialogue and Nazi robots? How about *Gun Fu*, a quirky new ongoing series from creator Howard Shum and Axiom Comics. In *Gun Fu* #1, it's 1936, and maverick cop Cheng Bo Sen has a problem with shooting up Hong Kong at the drop of a hat. But when England needs help sabotaging a Nazi project to create robot soldiers for use in their war effort, the queen sends for a reliable—but disposable—agent, and Cheng gets tapped for the job! But will his hip-hop slang get the better of him before the giant Nazi robots on his tail? Find out in this hilarious first issue, which features one of the best rickshaw chases we've seen in a long time! **$3.50** (Oct.)

SOJOURN (CrossGen)

WHY IT'S COOL This series goes a long way to proving that trolls aren't such bad guys after all—"Lord of the Rings" be damned! Commander Bohr takes the spotlight this ish, as he races to find the whereabouts of Arwyn. On his journey, he seeks shelter in a cave, and spares a mother bear who's defending her cubs, then later kills his own mother to free her from a painful disease. Talk about a pair of Hallmark moments.

IN ISSUE #16 Arywn and Gareth search for the second fragment of Ayden's bow in the underground catacombs of Ankhara—if they can survive getting into the city itself. By Ron Marz, Greg Land and Jay Leister. $2.95 (Oct. 16)

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN (Marvel)

WHY IT'S COOL We totally dig it when Ultimate continuity screws with the regular Marvel backstory, and *USM* #25 serves up a doozy! Everyone knows that the Green Goblin killed Peter's first love, Gwen Stacy, in regular Marvel history. But this time around, the Goblin tosses Mary Jane off a bridge, and at the end of the ish, it looks like she's pushin up daisies! Whew—it's déjà vu all over again!

IN ISSUE #28 & #29 Issue #28 lightens the load for Spidey with a high school adventure, but in #29, Peter's relationship with Gwen Stacy takes a shocking turn! By Brian Michael Bendis, Mark Bagley and Art Thibert. **$2.25** (Oct. 2 & 16 respectively)

ULTIMATE X-MEN (Marvel)

WHY IT'S COOL Mark Millar knows how to serve up the action, and issue #20 kicks off with a furious six-page battle sequence that left us reeling. The X-Men are battling the Acolytes on top of the Auckland Sky-Tower in New Zealand,

and the mutant terrorists are about to detonate a nuke. Wolverine defuses the situation as only he can—by chopping off the hand of the terrorist holding the detonator! That could put a crimp in a man's private life.

IN ISSUE #23 It's X-Man vs. X-Man when Cyclops and Iceman throw down against one another. By Mark Millar, Kaare Andrews and David McCraig. **$2.25** (Oct. 23)

UNCANNY X-MEN (Marvel)

WHY IT'S COOL The classic X villains have been in short supply lately, but issue #410 features the return of a kick-ass baddie we haven't seen in some time—and nothing can stop the Juggernaut! Check out Juggy's appearance in this ish, an amazing splash panel by Ron Garney where the big, bad powerhouse fills up every inch of space on the page. We can't wait to see him stomping some *Uncanny* ass!

IN ISSUE #414 The Uncanny squad gets an infusion of new blood, as former Alpha Flight speedster Northstar joins the team. By Chuck Austen and Sean Phillips. **$2.25** (Oct. 2)

USAGI YOJIMBO (Dark Horse)

WHY IT'S COOL Don't let the cute animals and cartoony style fool you—Stan Sakai can hold his own with any artist working today! Just check out the cover to issue #59—Usagi and a small band of samurai engaged in a furious swordfight with 30-plus bandits, all drawn in excellent detail! It's enough intricate action to make George Perez proud.

IN ISSUE #61 An elite ninja assassination squad uses Usagi and Jotaro as bait in the hunt for their former Neko Ninja Clan leader, Chizu. By Sakai. **$2.99** (Oct. 30)

WAY OF THE RAT (CrossGen)

WHY IT'S COOL CrossGen may have a brand-new superstar artist on its hands with the emergence of Jeff Johnson on this book. Johnson's pencils perfectly capture the Asian flair of this series, without skimping on detail or action—check out his awesome splash page of General Nubotai's barbarian horde preparing to storm the city of Zhumar in ish #3. You can almost smell the sweat and feel the steel of the invading warriors (just don't step in the horse poop).

IN ISSUE #6 Our hero Boon battles the Great Khan for control of the city of Zhumar, but the Khan has some sneaky tricks up his sleeves that may decide the outcome. By Chuck Dixon, Johnson and Tom Ryder. **$2.95** (Oct. 9)

X-STATIX (Marvel)

WHY IT'S COOL If you're up for a good mystery, there's no more mysterious character in comics than *X-Statix*'s Doop. And the bizarre floating blob just got even more puzzling after the events in *X-Statix* #1: In the back-up story, Doop gets charged with proving whether or not a new recruit is mentally balanced enough to join the team. But when this newbie winds up scared out of his mind, Doop hacks him into pieces and buries him in the woods! Look out—it's the Doop Witch Project!

IN ISSUE #4 Orphan gets confronted by all of the women in his life, including the now-dead U-Go Girl! By Peter Milligan and Mike Allred. **$2.25** (Oct. 30)

Y—THE LAST MAN (Vertigo/DC)

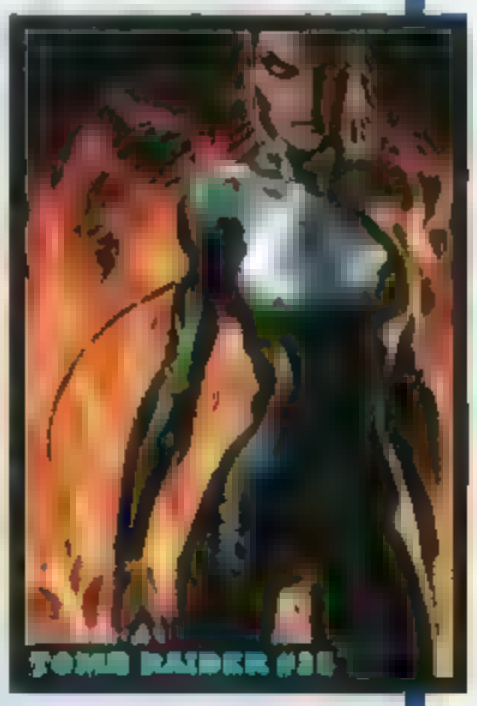
WHY IT'S COOL This is easily one of the best premises we've read in comics in a long time! Yorick Brown is an amateur escape artist and full time screw-up, but he suddenly finds himself the last man on Earth when a strange malady kills off every male human and animal on the planet! (Guess he'll be busy making donations at the fertility clinic!) But is the cause of this mass death mystical, biological or genetic? That's one of the mysteries that'll keep us coming back!

IN ISSUE #4 Yorick joins hundreds of female mourners at a memorial to the men who died in The Plague, but a horde of lady extremists crash the gig to put him into the ground! By Brian K. Vaughan, Pia Guerra and José Marzan Jr. **MR. $2.95** (Oct. 23)

cowtipping

You gotta feel for Top Cow—they're celebrating a birthday and planning a funeral in the same month.

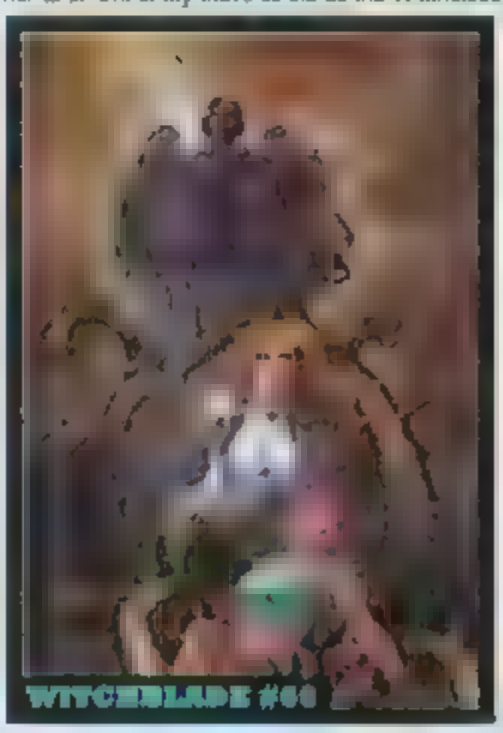
October marks Top Cow's seventh anniversary, and they're partying hardy with Witchblade Month, toasting the October 1995 premiere date of Sara Pezzini and her mystical gauntlet.



But that's not the only "celebration" going on. The Cow has big plans for one of its other iconic ladies, this one involving Lara Croft, the Tomb Raider. Be sure to check out "Endgame," a three-part crossover that starts with *Tomb Raider* #25—drawn by none other than Fathom creator Michael Turner!—continues in *Witchblade* #60, and concludes next month in the top-secret *Evo* #1, the brand-new series by David Wohl and Marc Silvestri. As the name implies, this could be the final hunt for Lara Croft, and as the tagline says, "There is one fate that no one can escape." Does this mean curtains for the Cow's resident treasure hunter? Find out by checking out all these great books.

TOMB RAIDER #25 "Endgame" kicks off here, as superstar artist Michael Turner joins John Ney Rieber to craft...the death of Lara Croft? The adventure begins when Lara heads to New York investigating the long-lost remains of a Native American settlement. **$2.99** (Oct. 9)

WITCHBLADE #60 "Endgame" continues, as Sara Pezzini investigates the terrible fate of her sometime partner Lara Croft. But the trail leads her to an evil entity that's as old as the Witchblade! **$2.99** (Oct. 30)



And be sure to pick up these other Top Cow offerings celebrating the Witchblade anniversary: *Witchblade* #1/2 (Oct. 23, $2.99), *Witchblade* #55 (Exclusive Battle of the Planets Cover, Oct. 16, price TBD), *Tomb Raider/Witchblade* #1 (Oct. 9, $2.99), *Tomb Raider/Witchblade Trouble Seekers* TPB (Oct. 23, $7.95), *Witchblade/Tomb Raider Uncut Holofoil Cover* (Oct. 23, price TBD)

tradingpost

You wanted 'em, you asked for 'em and now you got 'em—trade paperbacks out the ying-yang! Go nuts, there's something here for everyone!

NEW X-MEN VOL. 1 HC (Marvel)

WHY IT'S COOL This massive hardcover tome collects *über*-talented scribe Grant Morrison's entire first year on the series, from *New X-Men* #114–#126. This trade features the excellent Cassandra Nova storyline, starring *Wizard's* Best Villain of 2001, as the horrible little mutant looks to wipe out mutant *and* mankind by manipulating the Shi'ar Imperial Guard, the most powerful warriors in the galaxy. A whole new direction and attitude, as only Morrison could do. What's not to love?

BOTTOM LINE This has been one of the most talked-about series of the past year, and if you're an X-fan or a Morrison follower, you've *gotta* own this book. $29.99 (Oct. 23)

ASTRO BOY VOL. 8 (Dark Horse) Still stuck in the 20th century, Astro Boy must spring into action to stop a Martian fungus from devouring Earth. $9.95 (Oct. 30)

THE AUTHORITY: TRANSFER OF POWER (WildStorm/DC) Collecting the storyline from issues #22–#29, this trade features the Authority getting a spanking from a brand-new government-backed version of the team. MR. $17.95 (Oct. 16)

DANGER GIRL: THE ULTIMATE COLLECTION (Cliffhanger/DC) This trade collects all seven issues of the original series, plus a complete cover gallery, sketchbook and commentary by series creator J. Scott Campbell. $19.95 (Oct. 9)

DEADLINE (Marvel) A rookie *Daily Bugle* reporter who hates superheroes finds herself on the one beat she never wanted: the capes & cowls section! $9.99 (Oct. 9)

ESSENTIAL DAREDEVIL VOL. 1 (Marvel) Collect the first 25 issues of Daredevil's original series, featuring the work of Stan Lee, Wally Wood, Gene Colan and John Romita Sr. $14.99 (Oct. 9)

ESSENTIAL IRON MAN VOL. 1 (Marvel) Early Shell-head stories from *Tales of Suspense* #39–#72 get collected here, including battles with the Mandarin, Crimson Dynamo and Titanium Man. $14.99 (Oct. 16)

G.I. JOE VOL. 4 (Marvel) This trade collects Marvel's original *G.I. Joe* series, issues #31–#41, which includes the first appearances of Lady Jaye, Ripcord and Flint. $25.99 (Oct. 23)

INCREDIBLE HULK VOL. 2: BOILING POINT (Marvel) Bruce Banner finds himself a pawn caught in the middle of anxious police snipers and a shadowy government agent who just wants Hulk blood. Collects *Incredible Hulk* (vol. 2) #40–#43. $8.99 (Oct. 2)

JLA: A LEAGUE OF ONE (DC) When an ancient Greek oracle informs Wonder Woman that the JLA will die in battle, will she betray her friends in order to save them? $14.95 (Oct. 16)

JLA: TERRA INCOGNITA (DC) In this story from *JLA* #55–#60, the White Martians return to Earth with a plan to do away with their most hated enemies—the JLA—before taking over the world. $12.95 (Oct. 9)

LONE WOLF AND CUB VOL. 26: BATTLE IN THE DARK (Dark Horse) Lone Wolf and Cub become embroiled in a war of wits with the crafty Abere Kaiout that old codger may have one last trick up his sleeve. MR. $9.95 (Oct. 30)

NEGATION VOL. 1: BOHICA (CrossGen) In this collection of the first seven issues of the series, a band of kidnapped individuals find themselves the targets of experimentation by the alien force called the Negation. $19.95 (Oct. 16)

THE PATH VOL. 1: CRISIS OF FAITH (CrossGen) Collecting the first seven issues of the series, this trade tells the story of the monk Obo-San, who turns his back on his religion when he comes into possession of a weapon that can destroy gods. $19.95 (Oct. 2)

PETER PARKER, SPIDER-MAN: RETURN OF THE GOBLIN (Marvel) This storyline features the return of the deadly Green Goblin, back to torment Peter and Spider-Man once more, in this collection of *PPSM* #44–#47. $8.99 (Oct. 2)

POUNDED (Oni Press) Heavy Parker's the king of the punk scene in party-central Vancouver. But when an old flame he jilted returns to get her revenge, Heavy winds up getting punked out by her and her goons. MR. $8.95 (Oct.)

SANDMAN PRESENTS: THE FURIES (Vertigo/DC) In this graphic novel Lyta Hall embarks on a journey to explore her family connections to the fabled Furies of Greek mythology. MR. $24.95 (Oct. 30)

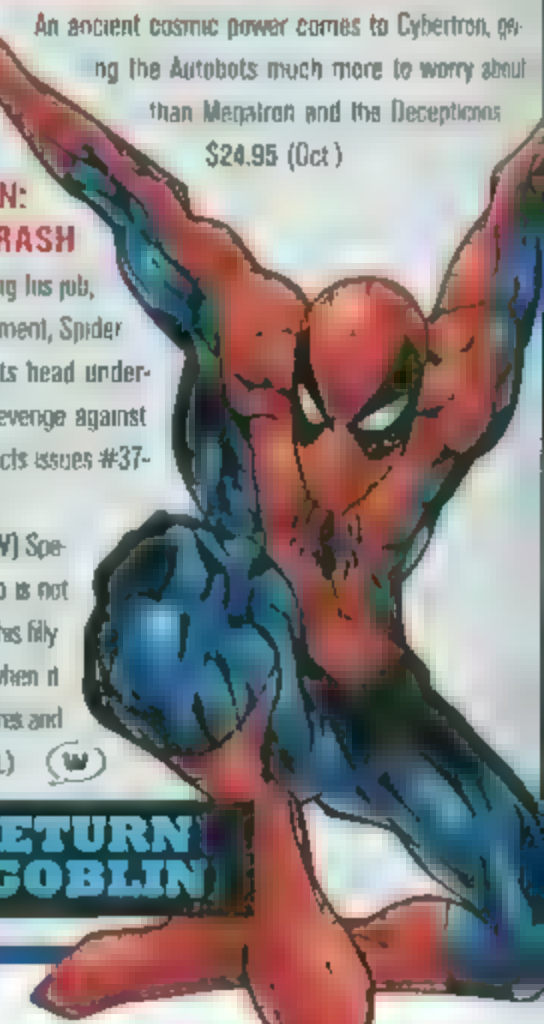
SOJOURN VOL. 2: DRAGON'S TALE (CrossGen) Arwyn recruits the help of a fiery dragon in her quest for revenge against the evil Mordath, in this trade collecting issues #7–#12. $15.95 (Oct. 23)

SPIDER-MAN'S TANGLED WEB VOL. 3 (Marvel) Collecting issues #12–#17 of the anthology series, this trade features tales by Zeb Wells, Brian Azzarello and Ron Zimmerman. $15.99 (Oct. 16)

TRANSFORMERS: DARK DESIGNS (Titan Books) An ancient cosmic power comes to Cybertron, giving the Autobots much more to worry about than Megatron and the Decepticons. $24.95 (Oct.)

TRANSMETROPOLITAN: SPIDER'S THRASH (Vertigo/DC) After losing his job, his money and his apartment, Spider and the Filthy Assistants head underground to hatch their revenge against President Callahan. Collects issues #37–#42. $14.95 (Oct. 16)

WYNONNA EARP (IDW) Special Agent Wynonna Earp is not your father's gunslinger—this filly deals in lead, but only when it comes to monsters, vampires and werewolves. $17.99 (Oct.)



SECRET STASH comics' hidden gems

ONE PLUS ONE

AN AGENT OF HELL, A GAMBLING ADDICT AND A MAN WHO CAN FORESEE YOUR DEATH DO 'BUSINESS' IN THIS MACABRE MYSTERY

THE DIRT There's bound to be trouble in a sleepy eastern seaboard town when a professional gambler, his pregnant girlfriend and a poor schlub who has the ability to foresee death in everyone he meets come face to face with a con man from Hell. Find out how they're all connected in Oni Press' latest mini-series, *One Plus One*.

DOYA LIKE? Take the hard-boiled cast of *100 Bullets*, mix in the mystical world of *Sandman* and you have the building blocks of *One Plus One*. Think "Twin Peaks" if it were a comic book.

DIDJA KNOW? Series creators Neal Shaffer and Daniel Krall originally came up with the idea for One Plus One five years ago while the two were working in a coffee shop.

Eddie's got problems.

First, he makes a living by playing high-stakes poker in a dimly lit dive-bar with society's dregs. Second, he just discovered that his live-in girlfriend, Celeste, is pregnant.

While those two situations would be enough to consider taking up serious drinking, Eddie's biggest problem is the one he's completely unaware of—David Coulson's looking for him.

Coulson, the star of Oni Press' five-issue mini-series *One Plus One*, seems like any normal guy. He's a handsome fella, well-mannered and well-spoken, only Coulson's got an unusual occupation; he's an employee of the devil whose "specialty" is fate.

Coulson's reluctant ally on this "business" trip is Leonard, a lonely alcoholic who tries desperately not to look at those around him. Leonard's no recluse; he's just cursed with foreseeing death. Instead of seeing a beautiful waitress, Leonard sees the future victim of a brutal car crash decaying in front of him.

So what do such diverse characters have in common? Series co-creators Neal Shaffer and Daniel Krall hope readers will ask that same question.

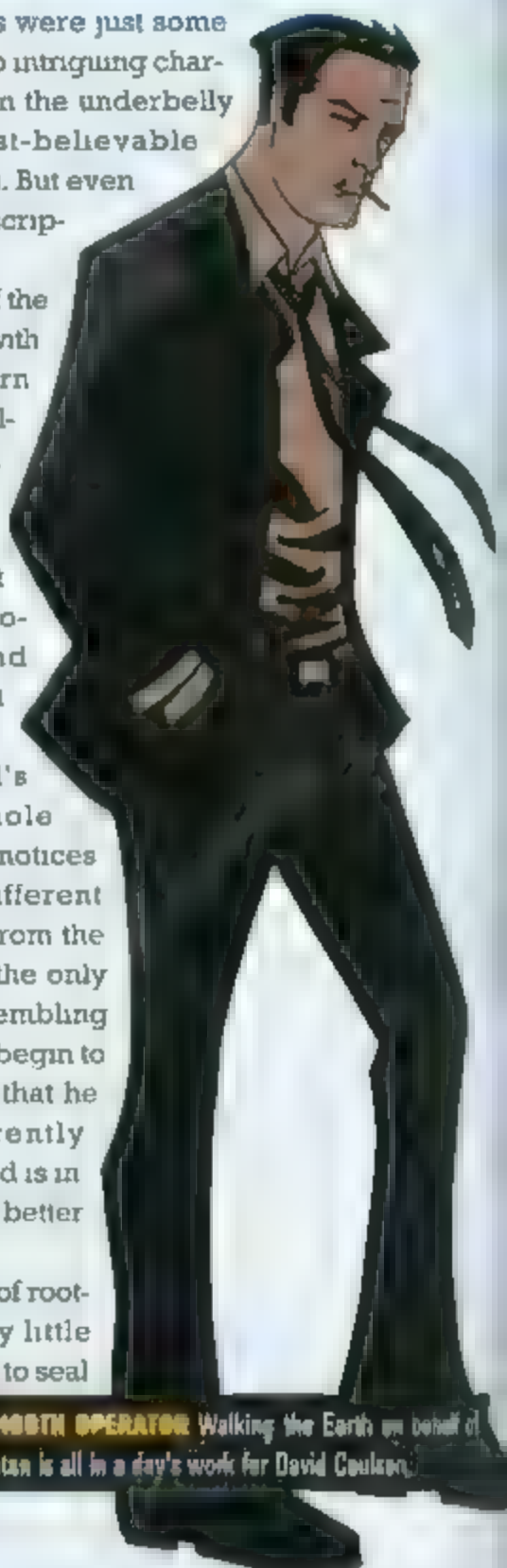
"*One Plus One* is a mystery at the core," explains artist Krall. "As the series progresses and David is brought to the forefront, there'll be a lot of answers and new questions."

Though describing the series as a simple mystery is like saying the Beatles were just some rock band. There's also intriguing characters, commentary on the underbelly of society and almost-believable supernatural elements. But even that is too simple a description of *One Plus One*.

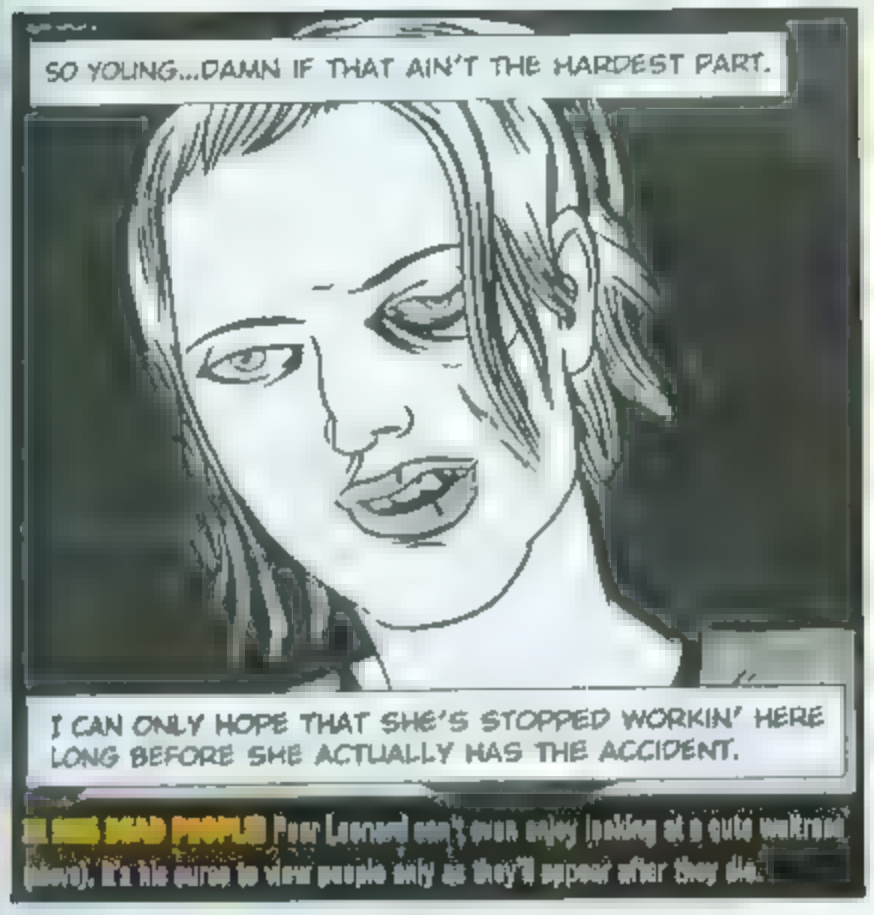
"The larger point of the story involves playing with the traditional Western ideas of damnation, salvation, heaven and hell," says series writer Shaffer.

The first issue, out since September, introduces Coulson and Leonard. Coulson just "happens" to find Dante's Bar, Leonard's favorite watering hole. Leonard immediately notices there's something different about Coulson aside from the expensive suit—he's the only one in the bar not resembling wormfood. As the two begin to talk, Coulson reveals that he died long ago, currently works for the devil, and is in town on some business better left unsaid.

"David's got a way of rooting out people's dirty little secrets and using them to seal their fates," hints Shaffer. "The thing that sets him apart



SMOOTH OPERATOR Walking the Earth on behalf of Satan is all in a day's work for David Coulson.


SO YOUNG...DAMN IF THAT AIN'T THE HARDEST PART.
I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT SHE'S STOPPED WORKIN' HERE LONG BEFORE SHE ACTUALLY HAS THE ACCIDENT.

from others in his line of work is his grip on humanity."

Enter Eddie in October's second issue. As fate would have it Eddie and Coulson sit across the poker table from each other at the 2131 Lounge, the local underground poker club. After Coulson cleans out Eddie, the down-on-his-luck father-to-be asks Coulson for help. And if *One Plus One* teaches us anything, you don't ask agents of the devil for help.

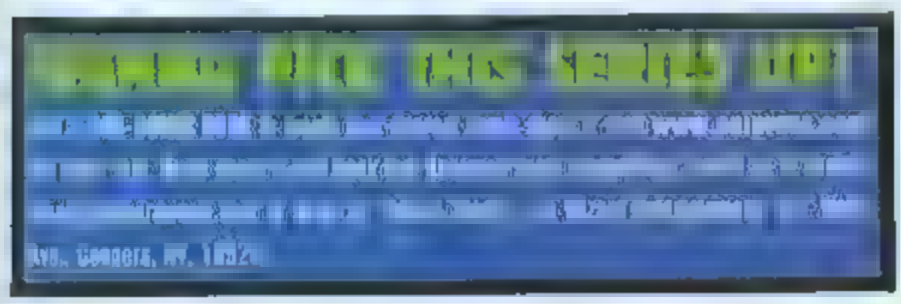
By November's issue #3, Coulson's teaching Eddie his devilish tricks of the trade—how to cheat and not get caught. Coulson decides when the time is right, he'll introduce Eddie to Leonard and find out if he can move on to his next wicked job.

One Plus One does a damn fine job covering all genre bases. The mystery of what Coulson wants with Eddie lingers throughout the series, while Leonard's ghastly visions provide some of the creepiest panels I've ever seen. Shaffer and Krall successfully stir up emotions with their characters. You'll feel pity for the broken-hearted Celeste and cursed Leonard, anger towards Eddie, and I defy you to think Coulson's anything less than cool. Krall's art style (an amalgam of Mike Allred, Eduardo Risso and a hint of Mike Mignola) melds perfectly with the intriguing plot.

In upcoming issues, readers will be introduced to Dexter, the proprietor of the 2131 Lounge who doesn't take kindly to cheaters. Meanwhile, another major character will have a change of heart, deciding to take action against the other players. This leads to an ending so shocking and flat-out scary, it'll blow your mind.

That said, pick up *One Plus One* now, unless fate has other plans on how to spend that three bucks.

THE LAST WORD Shaffer and Krall serve up one helluva creepy mystery with *One Plus One*. After reading this series, you'll definitely think twice about gambling and taking advice from strangers in expensive suits. ■ CASEY SELLAS

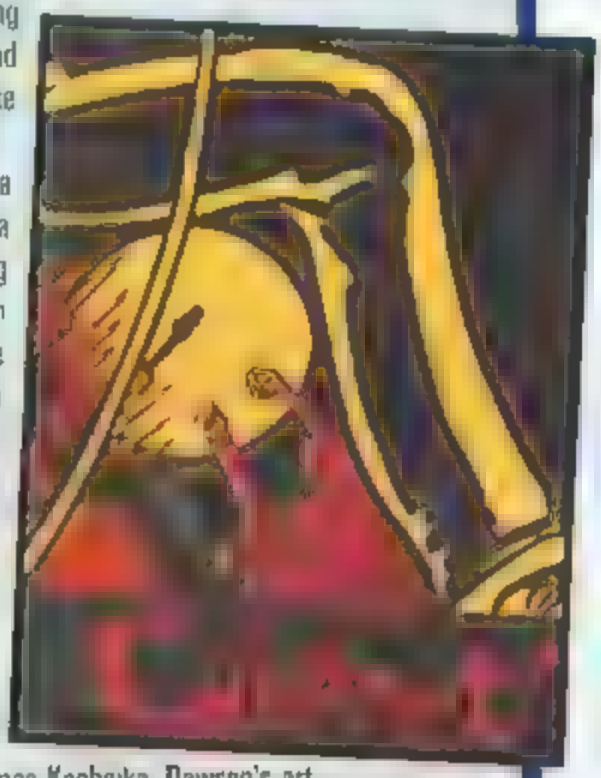


HIDE N SEEK

Does *One Plus One* sound like a good read? Then why not give these books a shot? All items ship in October unless otherwise noted.

LIFE LESSONS Sometimes life can be going great, and then BAM! You're at the lowest you've ever been.

So go the lives of the cast of *Cabaret*, a 160-page graphic novel self-published by up-and-coming small press superstar (and one helluva funny guy) Mike Dawson.

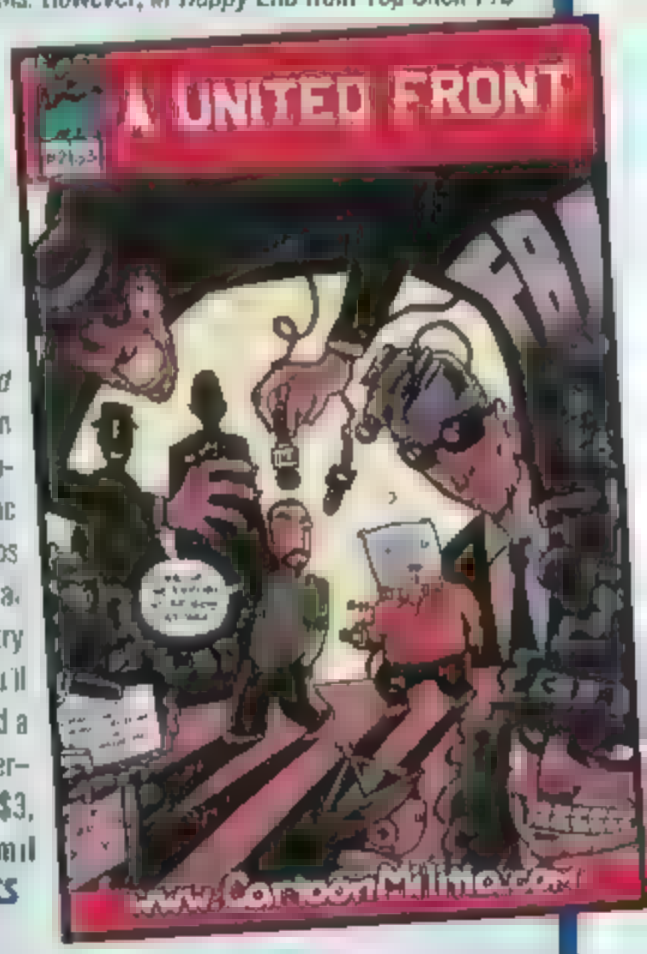


The book begins with a New Year's Eve party, circa 1999. Everything's going great and everyone's in good spirits—almost like you're watching an episode of "Friends." Fast forward a few months and this funny little sitcom takes a dramatic turn. Friends lose contact with each other, casual sex turns into big problems, and in the end, nothing is ever the same.

Like the work of James Kochalka, Dawson's art and writing are brilliant through their simplicity. While *Cabaret* may seem like a quick read, it's definitely worth savoring again and again afterwards. Visit **www.mikedawsoncomics.com** for ordering info. $12.95.

PUNKS NOT DEAD If you happened to miss out on Brian Wood and Steve Rolston's awesome mini-series *Pounded*, a story of punk-rock love and loss, Oni's got your hook-up. Be sure and pick up the *Pounded* trade paperback (and don't forget the compilation CD). $8.95, visit **www.onipress.com**.

HAPPILY EVER AFTER Everyone wants a happy ending in life, but it rarely ever happens. However, in *Happy End* from Top Shelf Productions, the artist known as Actus offers up the happy end we all wish we had. $21.95, visit **www.topshelfcomix.com**.



UNITED

WE STAND *A United Front*, from Cartoon Militia, gives new meaning to the term "eclectic comic." With mini-strips ranging from political satire to hip-hop poetry to straight-up art, you'll be hard pressed to find a more diverse—or cooler—book on the stands. $3, visit **www.cartoonmilitia.com** for info. ■ CS

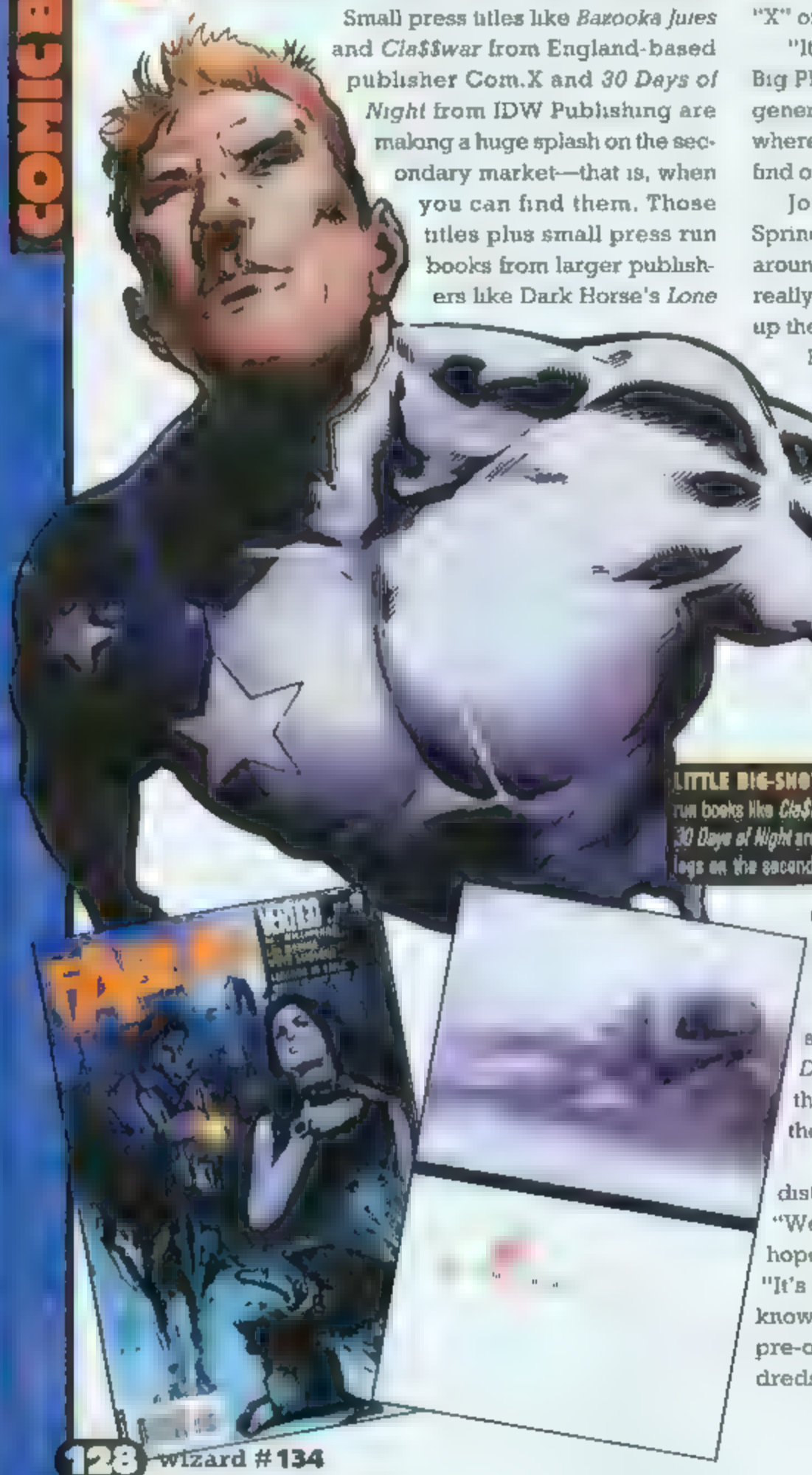
COMIC MARKET NEWS AND NOTES FOR COLLECTORS EVERYWHERE!

'NET GAINS

MOUTHING OFF

Strong word-of-mouth builds back-market buzz for lower-tier books

Think Spider-Man and the Hulk have the hottest books? Heck, you can find their comics everywhere. The books that truly smoke are nowhere to be found! Small press titles like *Bazooka Jules* and *Cla$$war* from England-based publisher Com.X and *30 Days of Night* from IDW Publishing are making a huge splash on the secondary market—that is, when you can find them. Those titles plus small press run books from larger publishers like Dark Horse's *Lone Wolf 2100*, CrossGen's *Sojourn* and DC/Vertigo's *Fables* and *Y: The Last Man* are selling out virtually everywhere.



LITTLE BIG-SHOTS Small press-run books like *Cla$$war*, *Fables* and *30 Days of Night* are proving to have legs on the secondary market.

Why the sudden interest in comics that don't have an "X" or "Bat" in their titles?

"It's all word-of-mouth," says Greg Bennett, owner of Big Planet Comics in Vienna, Va. "A lot of the interest is generated by buzz on the Internet. Discussion boards are where I think a lot of comic readers are going these days to find out what's out there that's good."

Josh Roberts, assistant manager at Caveman in Springfield, Mo., speculated that he'd sell *Cla$$war* #1 for around $6 if he could get any copies. "*Fables* has also done really well," Roberts said, "but I wouldn't necessarily mark up the price; DC stuff is always much easier to get."

Bennett disagrees on *Fables*' accessibility. "*Fables* is freakin' hot! I could get $8 for #1 and $5-$7 for #2."

It's no coincidence that this current crop of "small" books aren't presented in a traditional style, whether it's a cutting-edge take on the visual presentation or stories that are far afield from superheroes.

Russell Uttley, one of the three directors at Com.X, explains: "Our 'in' was always to create engaging entertainment rather than just great comics. We create stories and characters that we would enjoy seeing on a Friday night with a few mates down at the local cinema. Popcorn, chocolates, excitement and thrills—that's what we put into our comics."

That cinematic feel is also evident in the vampire-laced *30 Days of Night*, which has been optioned as a Hollywood movie with Sam Raimi attached as producer.

"The movie stuff always adds excitement to a book," says Bennett. "Everybody wants the first issue of *30 Days*, but I sold out a long time ago. Same thing with the Com X books. I've had tons of people pre-ordering the trades. They're going to sell fast."

The low availability of the Com.X books is due to distribution problems in getting the book to the states. "We are talking hard with Diamond [Distribution] in the hope that they will begin to satisfy demand," says Uttley. "It's difficult to identify the failure in the system; all we know is retailers say they're receiving one tenth of their pre-order, and those retailers who can stock up sell hundreds of each copy." ■ **JIM ARNEHART**

HOLLYWOOD ENDING

Nic Cage comic collection for sale

Making millions is all in a day's work for Nicolas Cage but this October, his milk money's coming from somewhere unexpected: comics

The Academy Award-winning actor (and comic enthusiast) is putting his extensive collection of pristine Gold and Silver Age comics up for auction at this year's Dallas Comicon, taking place October 10-13. Heritage Comics and The Mint, both specializing in high value comic auctions, co-produce the event.

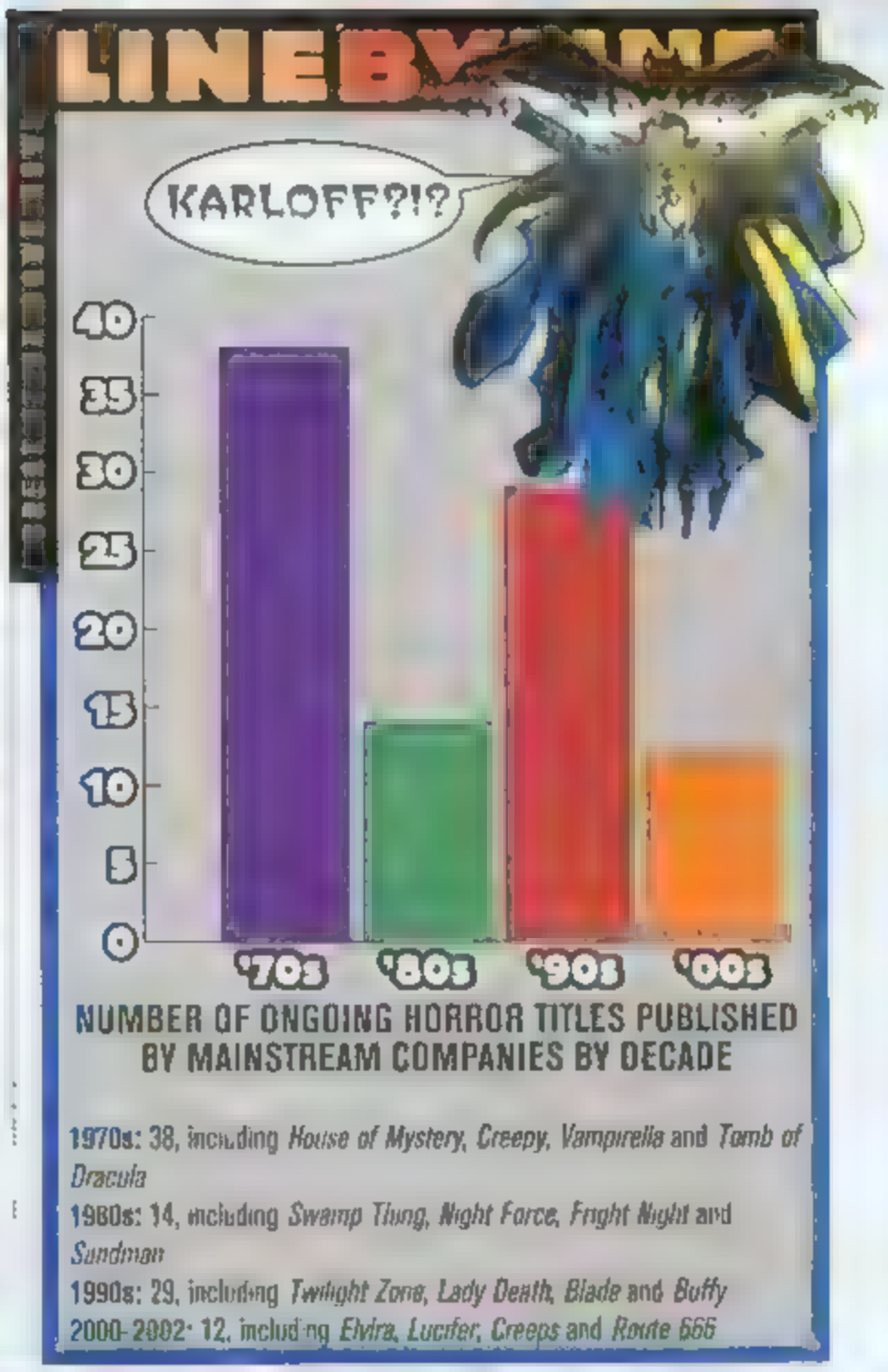
CGC is currently grading the entire collection of roughly 400 books, as per recommendation of Heritage Comics Director John Petty. "With the investment of slabbing," explains Petty, "the prices realized with be much, much greater."

So far, only a few specific issues in Cage's collection have been made available to the public. His Silver Age treasures include *Fantastic Four* #1, *X-Men* #1, *Amazing Fantasy* #15 and the "first" Silver Age comic, *Showcase* #4 (the first appearance of the new Flash). Cage is also relinquishing Golden Age wonders such as a near-mint copy of *All-Star Comics* #3 (the first appearance of the Justice Society), *Captain America Comics* #1, *Marvel Comics* #1 and the most coveted comic in America, the first issue of *Action Comics*.

Despite Cage's mainstream popularity, Petty believes the books can and will stand on their own merits. "The books are really worthy of attention," asserts Petty, "and really worthy of the price [they're anticipated] to bring." The collection is expected to earn "well into seven figures."

A separate catalog will be specially printed for the auction, identifying all of Cage's up-for-grabs books. Cage himself has said only that he's selling his comics in an attempt to divest his life of material things. ■ **DAVE MARSHALL**

LINE BY LINE



NUMBER OF ONGOING HORROR TITLES PUBLISHED BY MAINSTREAM COMPANIES BY DECADE

1970s: 38, including *House of Mystery, Creepy, Vampirella* and *Tomb of Dracula*

1980s: 14, including *Swamp Thing, Night Force, Fright Night* and *Sandman*

1990s: 29, including *Twilight Zone, Lady Death, Blade* and *Buffy*

2000-2002: 12, including *Elvira, Lucifer, Creeps* and *Route 666*

UPS & DOWNS

UP HELLBOY Due to the announcement of his forthcoming film, interest in Mike Mignola's hell-spawned paranormal investigator has been picking up. Back issues are getting snatched out of bins, the Hellboy bobblehead is long gone in most shops and the recent *Hellboy: The Third Wish* mini-series was a surprise strong seller

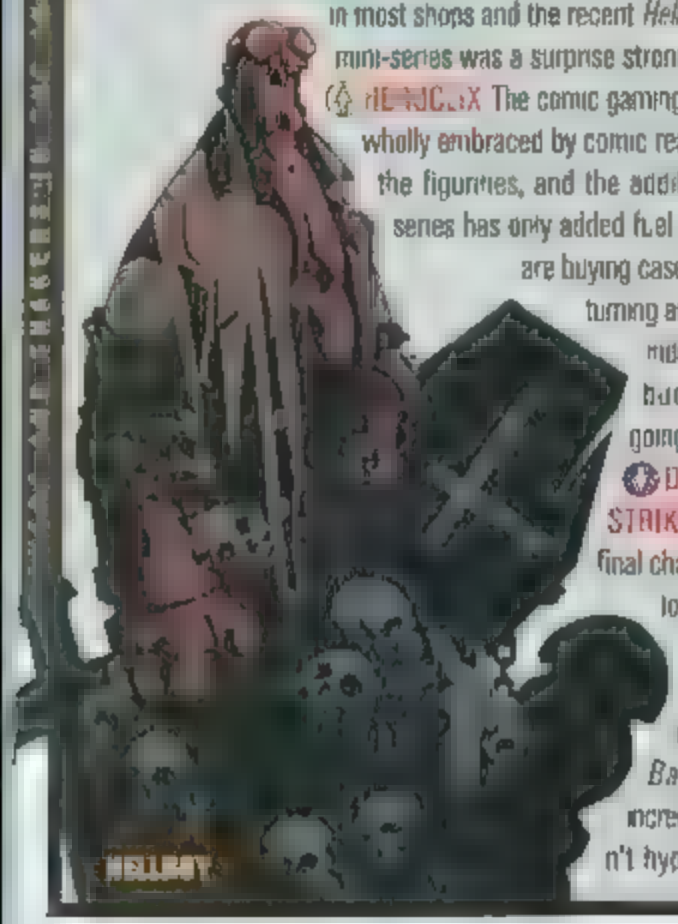
UP HEROCLIX The comic gaming sensation has been wholly embraced by comic readers who just want the figurines, and the addition of the new DC series has only added fuel to 'Clix fire! Dealers are buying cases for $300 and then turning around and selling the individual figures for big bucks—Superman is going for $45!

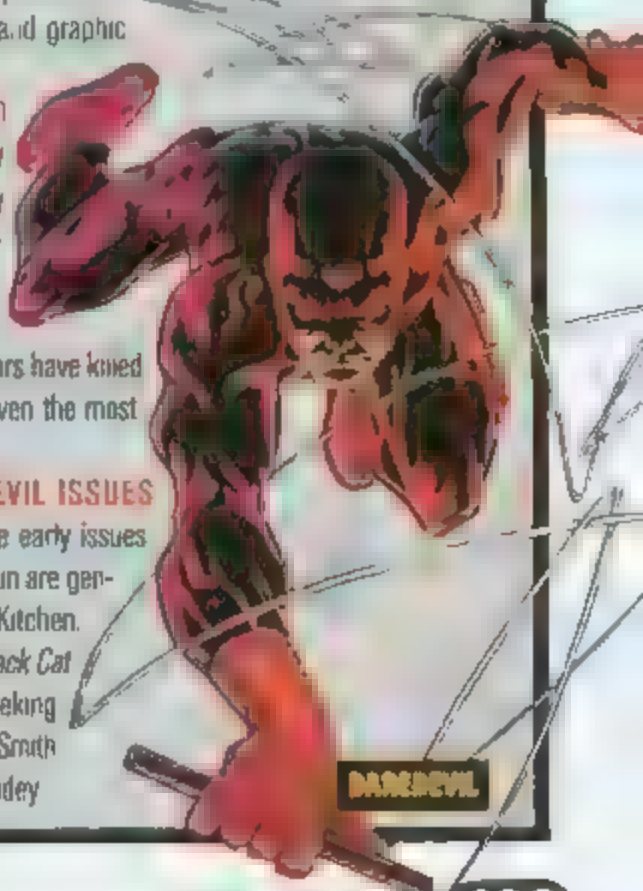
DOWN DARK KNIGHT STRIKES AGAIN #3 The final chapter of the epic follow-up was released in August...and fans didn't even know it! Not only was *Batman: DKSA* #3 incredibly late, but DC didn't hype its release at all, presumably opting instead to wait a couple of months to push the trade.

UP LIBRARIES Want to read comics for free? Then head to your local library! October 13-19 has been designated "Teen Read Week" (don't laugh) and libraries are responding with a nationwide program called "Let's Get Graphic!" (again, don't laugh), spotlighting the presence of comics trade paperbacks and graphic novels in public libraries.

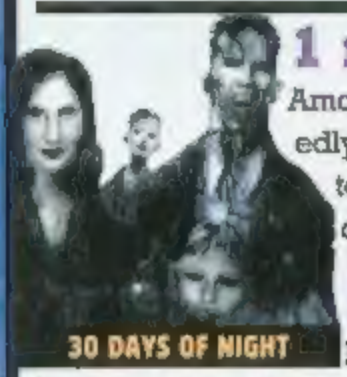
DOWN WILDCATS VERSION 3.0 This first issue of the new Wildcats ongoing quietly meowed with an underwhelming debut at #100 on the Diamond sales chart. Too many relaunches over the last 10 years have killed most of the interest held by even the most loyal 'Cat devotees.

UP KEVIN SMITH DAREDEVIL ISSUES What's old is hot again as the early issues from Kevin Smith's *Daredevil* run are generating more heat than Hell's Kitchen. Fans of Smith's *Spider-Man/Black Cat* mini-series in particular are seeking out *Daredevil* #8, the first time Smith ever wrote a tale featuring Spidey





Comics by the Numbers
THE TICKER



1 million
Amount, in dollars, reportedly paid for the film rights to Steve Niles' *30 Days of Night*

1,526
Percentage sales increase from July's *Fantastic Four* #59 to August's nine-cent *Fantastic Four* #60

310
Amount, in dollars, paid for a baseball signed by industry rivals Todd McFarlane and Peter David at an impromptu charity auction at the San Diego con

20
Number of hours straight the crew of "Daredevil" spent shooting on July 23, the last day of principal photography

14
Average number of hours a day that artist Mike Huddleston (*Harley Quinn*) spends drawing

6
Number of '80s nostalgia books in Diamond's Top 20 for the month of August. Includes *Transformers: G1* #5, *Transformers: Armada* #2, *ThunderCats* #0 and #1, *Battle of the Planets* #2 and *GI Joe* #9.

5
Number of issues of *Incredible Hulk* that Marvel plans to release in June 2003 (to coincide with the opening of the "Hulk" movie)

2
Number of Wizard staffers interviewed for Columbia Pictures' upcoming "Spider-Man" DVD (bossman Gareb Shamus and Editor Brian Cunningham)

SOLD ONLINE

WEIRD AND ONLINE

WASHABLE WINGHEAD If anyone ever asks if you'd like to see their eight inches of bath puppet, back away slowly without making eye contact. However, if they're referring to this late-'70s Captain America Bath Puppet (left, sold for $8), you'll have missed out on a truly bizarre toy. Captain America–opposing evil and soap scum!

PETER PARDNER Don't want a beer bottle shattered on your skull at the local honky-tonk? Well then, you better arrive wearing these custom-made Spider-Man Cowboy Boots. Crafted with a red leather visage of Hollywood's favorite wall-crawler and sold for $399, these will actually break a lot more than some surly redneck's heart.

KAL-ORIES What says "America" more than Superman and peanut butter? Probably a lot of things, but we're not concerned with those right now. What we are concerned with is this empty Superman Peanut Butter Jar from 1981. Oh, to be an icon whose 20-year-old garbage manages to collect $31.05...

THANKS, MR. SPIDEY! Spider-Man and the Hulk have a responsibility to the kids. It's their job to let them know that "Sharing Can Be Fun!" Marvel and Child Guidance teamed up in the mid-'80s to produce this record and filmstrip (below), billed as an "educational adventure." Sold for $5, it features Spidey giving Hulk a cookie and Hulk punching him in the face.

FUN WITH LEX Lex Luthor may be the president these days, but he doesn't see any sweet licensing action like he did in the '80s. The bad baldie had his own "Super Powers" Coloring and Activity Book (right)! Yeah, he had to wear that robotic monkeysuit (just like the "Secret Wars" Dr. Doom), but a loyal Lexite still contributed $1.80 online.

TELL US about your weird online findings! Send photos, etc. to:
SOLD ONLINE
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920
e-mail: soldonline@wizardworld.com

TREASURE HUNT

COMICS TO WATCH OUT FOR

IN BACK-ISSUE BINS

Squirmin' in your trousers from excitement over Top Cow's new *Darkness* series? If the preview on page 36 doesn't tide ya over, check out *Darkness* #40, last year's final issue of the first series. To send Jackie Estacado out with a bang, writer Paul Jenkins and artist Dale Keown (the creative team on *The Darkness* vol. 2) came aboard and promptly had Jackie blow himself up (and a large part of New York) in a warehouse blaze. Once new Darkness fans realize that *Darkness* #40 was Jenkins and Keown's first lights-out collaboration, expect this issue to catapult way past its current value of $2.50.

ON THE COMIC RACKS

Even as the *Marvel Mangaverse* ongoing series runs out of steam, the *Marvel Mangaverse: Spider-Man* one-shot released earlier this year remains a strong back-market seller. Fans just can't get enough of a cute 'lil Spidey with razor claws, we suppose. Recognizing the need for yet another Spider-Man mini-series, Marvel responds this month with *Spider-Man: Legend of the Spider-Clan* #1, a Mangaverse three-issue mini-series from writer Kaare Andrews and artist Skott Young. Retailers will be cautious with their orders on this one folks, so grab it while ya can!

Paul Schenkl

ASK THE COLLECTOR

Collecting tips and comic trivia from comics' crotchety cosmic guru

Q: I got into a little argument with a pal of mine the other day. He's such a huge Daredevil fan, he said DD could take out Thor! I said, "No way can Daredevil go toe-to-toe with an Asgardian!" Back me up, homes!–*bhm7146@tntech.edu*

A: *"Homes?" The Collector is not the pluralized equivalent of your shambled location of residence, bhm7146! As for your inept query (if you can call it that), I am afraid you are mistaken…MISTAKEN! The terran in red jammies known on your world as "Daredevil" did indeed engage in battle with an Asgardian…and emerged with a victory! In* Thor *(vol. 1) #392–#393, Hogun the Grim was rocketed from the Norse Gods' homeland in search of the Odinson. Crash-landing in Manhattan and delirious from the impact, Hogun immediately clashed with yon Man Without Fear, confusing him for a demon. Even as the Asgardian rampaged through the streets, Daredevil held his own against the warrior, attempting to calm him. In his jangled state, Hogun heard nothing but gibberish. Amazingly enough, the Grim One was fought to a standstill…until police gunned him down, causing him to plummet into the Hudson River. Later, a blood transfusion form Thor was required to save Hogun's life, but that's a whole other yarn.*

Q: Is my copy of DC's comic adaptation of "Little Shop of Horrors" worth anything? It has Rick Moranis in it!–*shatterswithin@hotmail.com*

A: *Bah! Why does the Collector ceaselessly sanction such infernal questions? The Collector should not even bother to tell you that your DC Little Shop of Horrors one-shot is worth a paltry $2 in near-mint condition…but I suppose I just did. And piss on your Rick Moranis!*

GOT A QUESTION?

Write your questions to:
ASK THE COLLECTOR
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920
e-mail: **askthecollector@wizardworld.com**

COOLSWAG

PRETTY STUFF THAT'S WORTH MONEY

Marvel's new Kubrick figures prove it's hip to be square. Produced by Japan-based Medicom, the basic seven-figure set consists of Spider-Man, Iron Man, Storm, Wolverine, Cyclops, Colossus and Silver Surfer. This set alone sells online for $50 and up, but everybody knows the big bucks lie in variants. With chase figures of Dr. Doom and a special "What If?" Venom available, this set is no exception. While ol' Gloomy Doomy shows up in one of every 24 cases, the Smilin' Symbiote only appears once in every 96! Based on *What If?* (vol. 2) #44 ("What If Venom possessed the Punisher?"), this figure is one deadly hunk o' plastic. Doom commands $25 online, while Venom easily goes for $60 all by his lonesome!

TOP50

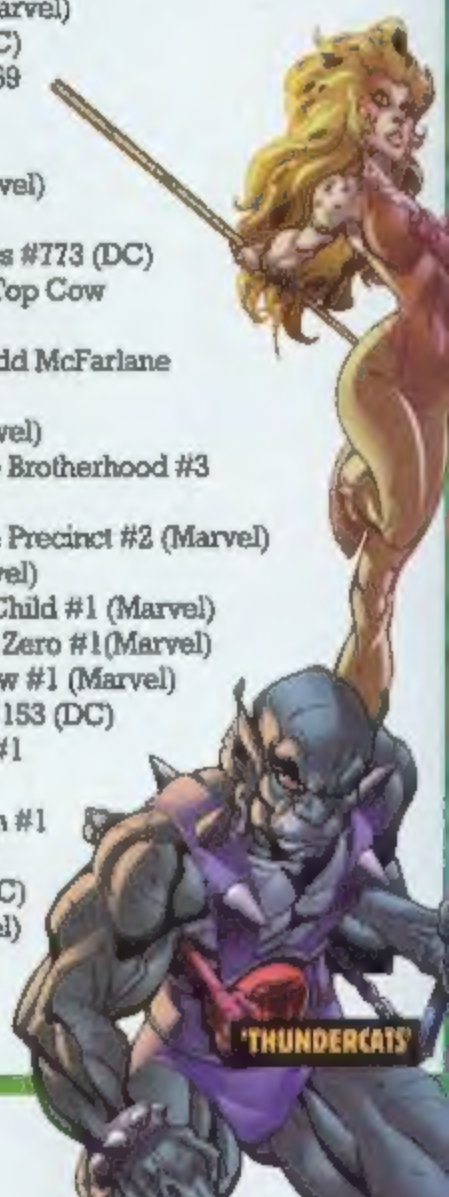
THE BEST-SELLERS OF AUGUST

The first numeral indicates current sales rank; the second, sales rank the previous month. Titles denoted with a (-) weren't available last month.

1. (*31*) Fantastic Four #60 (Marvel)
2. (*2*) Transformers: Generation One #5 (Dreamwave Productions)
3. (*5*) Ultimates #8 (Marvel)
4. (*1*) Transformers: Armada #2 (Dreamwave Productions)
10. (-) ThunderCats #1 (Wildstorm/DC)
6. (*7*) Amazing Spider-Man #44 (Marvel)
7. (*6*) Spider-Man/Black Cat: Evil that Men Do #3 (Marvel)
8. (*8*) New X-Men #131 (Marvel)
9. (*8*) New X-Men #130 (Marvel)
10. (-) **ThunderCats #0 (DC/Willstorm)**

"It was nice to do an actual story involving one of my childhood favorites," says *ThunderCats* #0 artist J. Scott Campbell. "For a couple of weeks, it felt just like I had returned to those afternoons after school. I don't think I'd want to linger too long in the past, but it's been nice to return to a simpler time for a while."

11. (*10*) Ultimate Spider-Man #25 (Marvel)
12. (*9*) Ultimate X-Men #21 (Marvel)
13. (*11, 12*) Uncanny X-Men #410 (Marvel)
14. (*11, 12*) Uncanny X-Men #411 (Marvel)
15. (*3*) Battle of the Planets #2 (Top Cow Productions/Image)
16. (*13*) Spider-Man: Blue #6 (Marvel)
17. (*14*) Wolverine #180 (Marvel)
18. (*16, 17*) X-Treme X-Men #17 (Marvel)
19. (*18*) Captain America #5 (Marvel)
20. (*19*) GI Joe #9 (Devil's Due/Image)
21. (*20*) JLA #69 (DC)
22. (*21*) Peter Parker: Spider-Man #47 (Marvel)
23. (-) Spider-Man/Daredevil #1 (Marvel)
24. (*20*) JLA #70 (DC)
25. (*15*) Green Arrow #16 (DC)
26. (*23*) Avengers #57 (Marvel)
27. (*25*) Daredevil #36 (Marvel)
28. (*27*) Incredible Hulk #44 (Marvel)
29. (*24*) League of Extraordinary Gentlemen Vol. II #2 (ABC/Wildstorm)
30. (*29*) Punisher #15 (Marvel)
31. (*22*) Batman #606 (DC)
32. (*31*) Fantastic Four #59 (Marvel)
33. (-) Call of Duty: The Wagon #1 (Marvel)
34. (*30*) JSA #39 (DC)
35. (*26*) Detective Comics #773 (DC)
36. (-) Rising Stars #21 (Top Cow Productions/Image)
37. (*33*) Spawn #125 (Todd McFarlane Productions/Image)
38. (*28*) X-Statix #2 (Marvel)
39. (*60*) Call of Duty: The Brotherhood #3 (Marvel)
40. (*52*) Call of Duty: The Precinct #2 (Marvel)
41. (*35*) Exiles #16 (Marvel)
42. (-) Weapon X: Wild Child #1 (Marvel)
43. (-) Weapon X: Agent Zero #1(Marvel)
44. (-) Weapon X: Marrow #1 (Marvel)
45. (*37*) Green Lantern #153 (DC)
46. (-) Weapon X: Kane #1 (Marvel)
47. (-) Weapon X: Sauron #1 (Marvel)
48. (*34*) Hawkman #6 (DC)
49. (*40*) Thor #52 (Marvel)
50. (*40*) Thor #53 (Marvel)



HOTTEST BACK ISSUES

HOT 10 comics

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the hottest back issues. These are the books ringing the registers this month...**

1 ULTIMATES #2

WRITER: Mark Millar
ARTISTS: Bryan Hitch & Andrew Currie

So you managed to get yourself a copy of *Ultimates* #1–big freakin' deal! It's the second issue that has fanboys drooling all over themselves (please guys, have some dignity). Initial retailer orders were extremely low, and just to remind ya, Marvel ain't printing up any more copies until the trade. Looks like those revamped Avengers are the hottest thing going over at the House of Ideas, outselling the likes of Spidey and (*gasp!*) the X-Men on the charts. **LAST MONTH: N.R. (Not Rated)**

2 PETER PARKER: SPIDER-MAN #44

WRITER: Paul Jenkins
ARTIST: Humberto Ramos

For the second month in a row, Paul Jenkins and Humberto Ramos prove that Straczynski and Romita Jr. aren't the only ones producing must-read Spidey stories. Hats off to the creative duo for not only resurrecting Norman Osborn, but for pulling off a great story that's nothing short of amazing (pun intended). Buzz continues to build around this new arc, and you'll be lucky to find the first issue of the Jenkins/Ramos run for less than $17.50. **LAST MONTH: 2**

3 TRANSFORMERS: G1 PREVIEW

WRITER: Chris Sarracini
ARTISTS: Pat Lee & Rob Armstrong

Ya gotta hand it to those guys over at Dreamwave. Not only did they obtain one of the most lucrative '80s licenses, but they've turned the Robots in Disguise into badasses! The *Generation 1 Preview*, which could only be found at select cons in 2001, served as DW's Transformers debut and is now pretty darn tough to find. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

4 INCREDIBLE HULK #40

WRITER: Bruce Jones
ARTISTS: John Romita Jr. & Tom Palmer

After six consecutive months on the Hot 10 list, *Incredible Hulk* #34 steps down only to be replaced by issue #40, thanks in part to the recent "Return of the Monster" trade, collecting issues #34–#39 (#40 starts the new arc). There's been massive interest in this issue, and many areas are already reporting significant price hikes. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

5 FABLES #1

WRITER: Bill Willingham
ARTISTS: Lan Medina & Steve Leialoha

You read about this series in *Wizard* #133, and now *Fables*–the Vertigo epic which combines the world of make-believe with the real world–is slowly becoming a phenomenon on the back market. The first issue of the series has already bounced up to $3.50 and, with its low print run, looks to be climbing higher in the coming months. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

6 LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN II #1

WRITER: Alan Moore
ARTIST: Kevin O'Neill

When a company puts out a project with the name "Alan Moore" on the cover, they've basically found a way to legally print money. When it's Moore on like the *League* sequel, it's no surprise that this first issue is making like the Invisible Man and disappearing from comic shops. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

7 DAREDEVIL #1

WRITER: Kevin Smith
ARTISTS: Joe Quesada & Jimmy Palmiotti

Move over, Spidey–Marvel's got a new golden-boy superhero who just so happens to be the Man Without Fear. Due to the fact that DD's upcoming film features scenes lifted directly from 1998's Smith/Quesada/Palmiotti revamp, the first issue of their run has hopped back on the Hot 10 train. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

8 BATMAN #605

WRITER: Ed Brubaker
ARTISTS: Scott McDaniel & Andy Owens

It's official–Bruce Wayne's not a cold-blooded murderer after all. (Seriously, did you ever believe he actually was?) However, fans were eager to pick up this issue, the conclusion to the 30-odd-part "Bruce Wayne: Murderer?"/"Fugitive" saga. Who was the murderer? Well, his name rhymes with David Blaine. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

9 30 DAYS OF NIGHT #1

WRITER: Steve Niles
ARTIST: Ben Templesmith

Wanna know where you can find the next big thing in comics? Read "Secret Stash" each month! For example, after our review of IDW's *30 Days of Night* in *Wizard* #131, sales of the book skyrocketed, and you'll be hard pressed to find a first print of issue #1 these days. Unless of course you're willing to dish out $7.50. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

10 Y: THE LAST MAN #1

WRITER: Brian K. Vaughn
ARTISTS: Pia Guerra & Jose Marzan Jr.

Could we be seeing the beginnings of a Vertigo renaissance? Since the imprint introduced both this series and *Fables*, mainstream fans have flocked to the obscure DC offshoot that was once synonymous with cult followings. In the case of *Y: The Last Man*, positive word of mouth has spread quickly, and retailers now sell the first issue at a premium. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

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